

25c

No. 2 APRIL 1956



AN
ORIGINAL

EC

PICTO-FICTION
MAGAZINE

Adult Tales of

TERROR

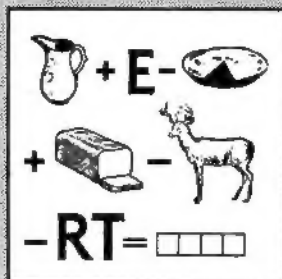
Horror and Suspense

ILLUSTRATED

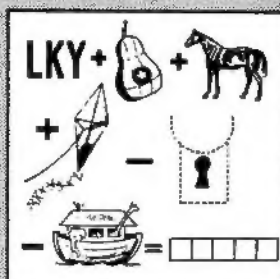


Introducing...
PICTO-FICTION

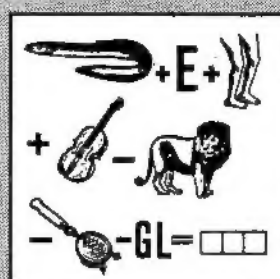
Can You Solve These 3 Puzzles?



No. 1
Solution Is One
of Last Names
Below:
John E. ROBE
Henry FORD
Alice CARY
Alexander G. BELL
Johann S. BACH
William PACA



No. 2
Solution Is One
of Last Names
Below:
Robert BURNS
John BROWN
Ethel ALLEN
Alfred E. SMITH
H. G. WELLS
Sigmund FREUD



No. 3
Solution Is One
of Last Names
Below:
John GAY
Wm. H. LOW
Walter MAP
Edgar W. NYE
Robert E. LEE
Samuel J. WAY

**SEND IN YOUR ANSWERS ON COUPON BELOW AND
RECEIVE FREE DETAILS ON HOW YOU MAY SHARE IN**

\$100,000.00

IN CASH PRIZES



**THIS MAY BE
YOUR TIME
TO WIN!**

You've read of others winning big prizes. You've seen their pictures in the papers, smiling broadly and beaming at their good fortune. Well, maybe this is YOUR time to win!

Think what it could mean to you! The home of your own you've always dreamed of! A college education for your child! Perhaps at last going into business for yourself!

Whatever your dream, act today on this great opportunity... presented under sponsorship of the publishers of The Standard International Encyclopedia... and designed to publicize this great reference work and further its distribution.

Believing that people like puzzles, and that puzzles in themselves are inherently educational, the sponsors have combined the challenge of puzzles with the opportunity to get rich—with the result being this \$100,000.00 Opportunity Puzzle Contest, in which YOU MAY WIN A FORTUNE IN CASH!

AS YOU READ this page, you have before you a truly remarkable opportunity... an opportunity to win thousands and thousands of dollars in an exciting, fascinating contest with new and stimulating puzzles.

Today!—right now!—ACT on this opportunity! See the three puzzles printed above. And, following the procedure explained with the Sample Puzzle in the lower part of this page, see if you can find the name each puzzle represents.

When you have done that, fill in your answers to the three puzzles, along with your own name and address, on the coupon in

the lower left corner of the page. Mail the coupon promptly—to the address shown—and we will send you, FREE and entirely without obligation, full rules, details and the official set of basic puzzles of the Opportunity Puzzle Contest, in which \$100,000.00 in Cash Prizes will be awarded.

Yes—one of 400 cash prizes may become yours in this contest—a 1st Prize of \$50,000.00!—a 2nd Prize of \$10,000.00!—a 3rd Prize of \$7,500.00!—a 4th Prize of \$5,000.00!—or any one of the other prizes shown in the official prize list printed at the right.

— \$50,000.00 1st Prize May Become Yours! —
Fun and Fortune Await You in This Fascinating Contest

The Sample Puzzle below will give you an idea of how to solve the interesting name-puzzles featured in this \$100,000.00 Opportunity Puzzle Contest. And the puzzles you see above are actually the first three official puzzles of the contest.

First, of course, study the Sample Puzzle, and read carefully the explanation printed along with it. Then try solving Puzzles No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3 above, and see if you can find the famous name represented by each puzzle, in the list of names printed under it.

In this way you will get a taste of the enjoyment and challenge presented in the puzzles of this contest. And as to the thrill of winning, can't you yourself imagine what it would be like to win \$50,000.00, \$10,000.00, \$7,500.00 or any other of the cash prizes shown at the right?

This may indeed be the opportunity you've been waiting for!—to free you from money cares and bring you the security and the luxuries you have always craved!

Act today to get in on this great opportunity! Right now!—fill in your answers to Puzzles 1, 2 and 3 on the coupon at the lower left. Also fill in plainly your own name and address, and mail the coupon promptly to the address shown. We will then rush you additional puzzles, rules and details explaining just how you go about making yourself eligible to win \$50,000.00, \$10,000.00, \$7,500.00, \$5,000.00 or any other of the cash sums to be awarded.

Don't put it off! Act here and now, while this opportunity is before you! Solve the three puzzles above, and mail the coupon TODAY!



**Someone Must Win!
Why Not You!**

**400
CASH
PRIZES**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
**1st PRIZE
\$50,000.00**

2nd Prize... \$10,000.00
3rd Prize... \$7,500.00
4th PRIZE... \$5,000.00
5th PRIZE... \$2,500.00
6th PRIZE... \$1,500.00
7th PRIZE... \$1,500.00
8th PRIZE... \$1,000.00
9th PRIZE... \$1,000.00
10th PRIZE... \$1,000.00

11th thru 15th, ea. \$200.00... \$1,000.00
16th thru 30th, ea. \$100.00... \$1,500.00
31st thru 100th, ea. \$75.00... \$5,250.00
101st thru 150th, ea. \$50.00... \$2,500.00
250 Additional, ea. \$35.00... \$8,750.00

TOTAL... \$100,000.00

© Standard International Library, N. Y.

**OPPORTUNITY PUZZLE CONTEST Dept. EC-1
31 West 47 St., New York 36, N. Y.**

Listed in box at right are my answers to Puzzles 1, 2, and 3. I am interested in your \$100,000.00 Cash Prize Contest and would like you to send me—without charge or obligation—the set of basic puzzles together with full rules and details as to how I may win \$50,000.00 First Prize or any other of the 400 prizes.

Name _____

Address _____

City & State _____

PUZZLE NO. 1

PUZZLE NO. 2

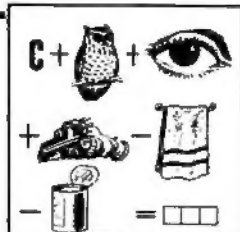
PUZZLE NO. 3

**This SAMPLE PUZZLE
Will Give You the Idea!**

Before trying to solve Puzzles 1, 2 and 3 above, let's solve this Sample Puzzle:

Note the various letters and objects, and the plus and minus signs. C plus OWL plus EYE plus TANK... gives us COWLEYETANK. Next, minus TOWEL minus CAN means that from COWLEYETANK we take away the letters TOWELCAN, leaving YEK.

Now, in the list of names under the puzzle, we see the last name of Francis Scott KEY, and by re-arranging the letters Y E K to K E Y, we have KEY as the correct solution to this puzzle.



SOLUTION IS ONE OF LAST NAMES BELOW:
Edward W. BOK
Robert E. LEE
Peter PAN
Francis Scott KEY
Edgar Allan POE
Frank ART

Act TODAY—This May Be YOUR OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFETIME!

NOW! Give Yourself a \$168-a-Month Raise!

**We'll start you in a proven money-earning
spare-time business at no cost to you!**

SEND FOR *FREE* BUSINESS KIT!

Here's a business for you that will be as much fun as it is profitable... and you don't have to invest one cent...ever! We've helped thousands of men succeed in this unique business...and we'd like to do it for **you**, too. Just 2 orders a day from friends, neighbors, relatives, in "off hours" earns you \$168 EXTRA a month! James Kelly of Ohio took so many orders for these Nationally-Advertised shoes that he made \$93.55 in just ONE evening! Fred Mapes of California regularly makes \$5 to \$10 every hour he devotes to his Mason Shoe business! There is no limit on what you can earn!

It's **easy** with our way of selling shoes. We set you up in a complete "shoe store" business you can run from your home. We carry the stock and ship the shoes. All you do is show the styles to your family, friends, people where you work, etc...and take orders. You have a profitable business with no rent, light bill, clerk hire or other costs to worry you. **You keep 100% of your profit!**

Here's why you'll make money!

- You offer 170 comfortable fast-selling styles...far more than a store!
- You have an amazing range of sizes (2½ to 14) and widths (AAAA to EEEE). Even hard-to-fit people can buy from you!
- Because we carry over 200,000 pairs in stock, your customers get **exactly** what they want...no misfits or substitutions!
- You feature exclusive Velvet-eez shoes with foamy-soft **air-cushion innersoles** that let you "walk on air." Built for supreme comfort, Mason shoes also feature built-in strong steel shanks, Air-Cushion longitudinal support, Nylon stitching. Advertised in Esquire, Good Housekeeping and on TV, they'll be available **only** from **you**—not sold in stores!
- You save your customers money, and the time they would waste "shopping around" shoe stores.

Take Orders For Over 170 Dress-Sport-Work Shoe Styles!



30 kinds of work shoes!
A style for every trade! Special Neoprene, Cork, Cushion soles, heels...ventilated work shoes...even Safety Toe Shoes!

Smart dress, sport styles!
The last word in styling! Many fine, unusual leathers. Cool Nylon Mesh styles, moccasins, 2-tones and Cush-N-Crepe soled shoes!

70 Styles for Women!
Satisfy almost every taste! Many comfort features. Low-heeled, high-heeled, casuals, service shoes, latest styles!

No wonder you'll have the biggest and best "shoe store" business in town!

MASON SHOE MFG. CO.
Desk MS150, Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin
Since 1904



You'll get a Starting Kit *FREE!*

As soon as we receive the coupon below we'll send you a complete Business Outfit **FREE and postpaid!** It features the entire Mason Collection in full color; contains 10-second Air Cushion demonstrator, valuable Booklet chock full of how-to-make-money hints, special Measuring Board, advertising reprints...everything else you need to start making cash profits from the first hour! We'll also show you how to earn monthly **Bonus Checks** and win costly prizes **Free!**

Mason Shoes will be available ONLY from You!

Because Mason Shoes are not sold in stores, you get **repeat** orders from delighted customers almost automatically! Steady cash profits every month! Since everyone you know wears shoes...**EVERYBODY IS A PROSPECT!** No wonder this is the perfect "off-hours" business: a quality product everybody needs...backed by the famous Good Housekeeping Guarantee Seal...one you can take orders for 12 months of the year. Want to see how much money you can make? For a 2¢ postcard you can try it **NOW**...start your exciting business **right away!**

RUSH THIS STAMP FOR YOUR FREE BUSINESS OUTFIT!

Mr. Ned Mason, Vice President
Mason Shoe Mfg. Co., Desk MS150
Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

Yes, I'd like to give myself a \$168 a month raise! Please set me up as your man in my community by rushing my Complete Starting Shoe Business Outfit **FREE** and postpaid so I can start making extra money from my first hour!

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____ State _____



TERROR

No. 2 APRIL 1956

ILLUSTRATED

IN THIS ISSUE

Cover by Reed Crandall

HORROR IN THE FREAK TENT.....	Al Feldstein 3
	<i>Illustrated by Reed Crandall</i>
REQUIEM.....	John Lerner 15
	<i>Illustrated by Graham Ingels</i>
MOTHER LOVE.....	Maxwell Williams 25
	<i>Illustrated by Charles Sultan</i>
HEAD MAN.....	Jack Oleck 35
	<i>Illustrated by Jack Davis</i>
REFLECTION OF DEATH.....	Alfred E. Neuman 45
	<i>Illustrated by George Evans</i>

This is the second issue of "Adult Tales of TERROR Illustrated", one of a series of four new magazines to be presented in the novel and revolutionary form of adult entertainment which we at E. C. call "Picto-Fiction". The others are: "CRIME Illustrated", "CONFESSIONS Illustrated" and "SHOCK Illustrated".

At this writing, letters on TERROR's first issue are just beginning to come in. Here are some excerpts:

... I enjoyed your new E. C. terror magazine very much, and especially liked the "Picto-Fiction" style of story-telling. The magazine was excellent for a first issue, and will probably increase in quality with each succeeding one. Best of Luck.—Jerry McHone, Asheville, N. C.

... To put it mildly, I was more than pleased with the first issue. All in all, you have a great idea in your new medium, "Picto-Fiction". Keep up the high quality, and lots of luck.—Jack Promo, Detroit, Mich.

We plan a Readers' Letter Page in the next issue of TERROR Illustrated. We welcome your letters. Write to:

The Editors—TERROR Illustrated
Room 706, Dept. 2
225 Lafayette Street
New York 12, N. Y.

PUBLISHER

william m. gaines

EDITOR

albert b. feldstein

PRODUCTION

ric doonan

BUSINESS MGR.

lyle stuart

SUBSCRIPTIONS

gloria orlando

HORROR IN THE FREAK TENT



My name is Henry Hastings. Once upon a time I was the manager of one of those two-bit carnivals that hits your town every now and then. You know the kind: amusement rides, acrobats, chiseling games, girlie shows, pickpockets.

Like I say, once upon a time I managed one of those sucker traps. But I don't any more. I quit my job and I left the carnival racket, and I wouldn't go back for all the money in the world.

Most people, when they think of carnivals, think of calliope music, and ferris wheels, and pink cotton candy. And it makes them feel happy. It makes them think of all the fun they've ever had.

Me, I get sick to my stomach!

Because when I hear calliope music, or see a ferris wheel, or some grimy-faced kid eating pink cotton candy . . . when I even think about those things . . . I start remembering the carry I managed, and the special attraction it had. We were all pretty proud of it. It was the only carry on the circuit with a Freak Show. "Zolotow's Freaks" it was called. And it really pulled in the people.

R. CRANDALL

The owner of the freak concession was a short, dumpy-looking character named Lewis Zolotow. Everybody in the carny called him "Looney." Except his freaks, that is. They were taught to have more respect. Looney considered the freaks beneath him, and treated them accordingly. He was "Mister Zolotow" to them.

Out front, on the midway, you'd think Looney was the grandest guy in the world. I remember I used to walk over often, just to hear his pitch. He was one great showman.



Looney seemed to take sadistic delight in torturing the people who worked for him. And none were spared his abuse.

"What's the matter?" he'd snarl at Xetal, the Indian Rubber Man, grabbing his arm and twisting it viciously. "Don't you like your job? I caught your act tonight. Stretch it! Stretch it more!"



But Looney was just that. A showman. The whole thing was an act with him. Out front, he was all smiles. Big-hearted. Considerate of the freaks he brought out to tease the customers into seeing more.

But backstage, he was a rat. He treated the freaks like dirt. And they despised him. But they were helpless. He was the boss, and to cross him meant they'd be out of a job.

"Smile at the people," he'd scream at Fanny, the Fat Lady. "Don't just sit there, you overgrown cow! Earn your keep!"



And there was Corpus, the Armless and Legless Boy. Corpus had been born without limbs and was quite helpless. Zolotow was particularly mean to him. Especially at the chow table.

"I told you a thousand times, Fanny," Looney would shriek, "don't feed him! Put the plate down in front of him! Let him eat by himself!"



Poor Corpus would be forced to eat like a dog, and Zolotow would roar with glee, while the other freaks would watch with tears in their eyes.

"Corpus," he'd laugh. "If you had whiskers . . . I'd call you 'Fido'!"



The Freak Show concession owner never passed up an opportunity to inflict severe physical and mental agony upon his employees. His perverted sense of humor kept him well-supplied with ingenious methods. One night, he drew Ricardi aside as he was rehearsing his act.

"How are you and Marja getting along lately, Ricardi?" Looney whispered out of the side of his mouth.

"What do you mean, Mr. Zolotow?" Ricardi studied him.



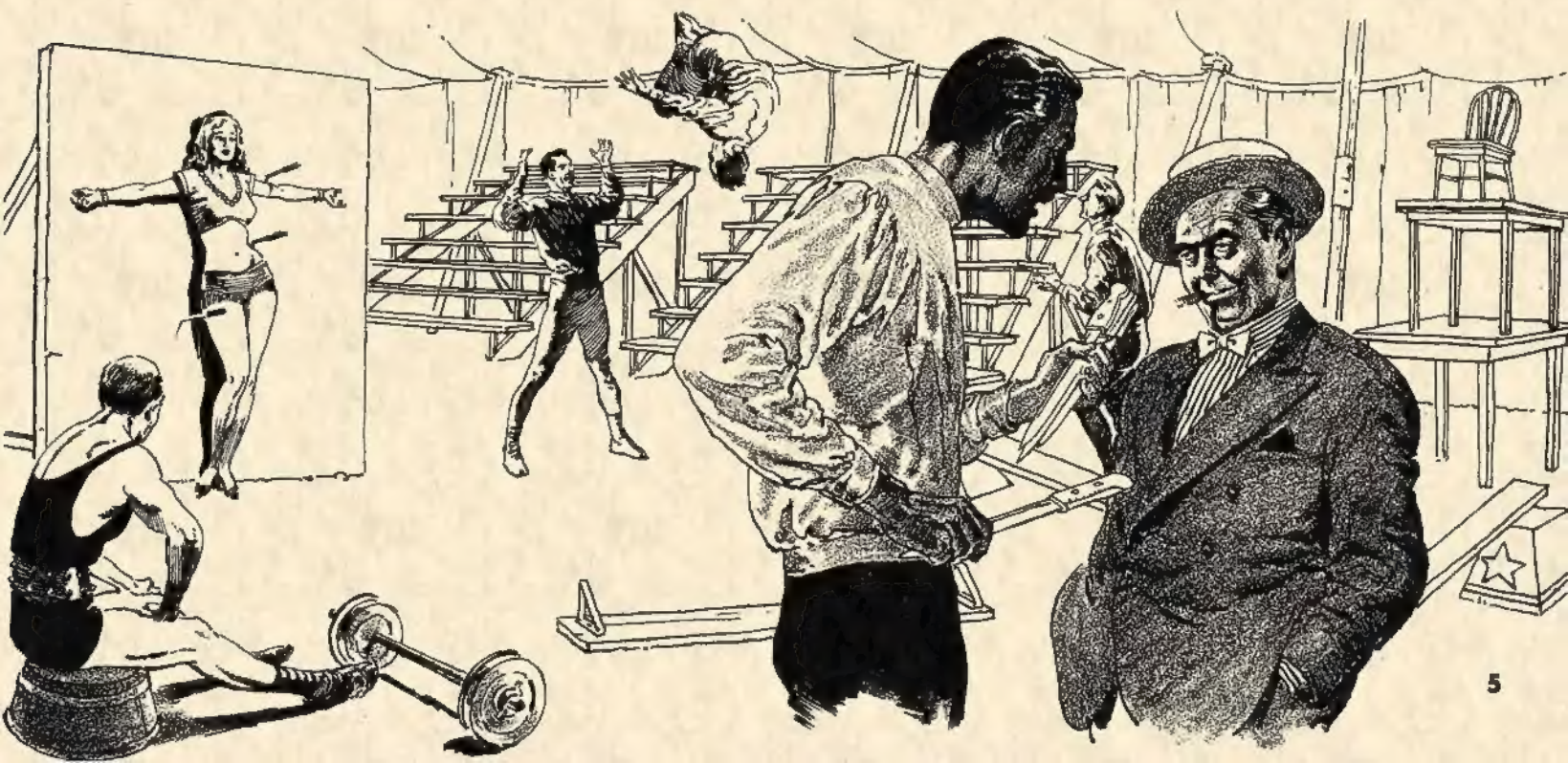
Ricardi was the sharp-eyed Knife Thrower. His act consisted of hurling knives, ice-picks, cleavers, and the like at his lovely young wife who stood spread-eagled against a board about twenty feet away. Ricardi was sensational.

"I just thought you ought to know, that's all," Looney nodded toward Marja. "I don't like to see anybody being made a fool of!"

"It's your wife, Ricardi!" Looney puffed on his cigar. "I happen to know she's two-timing you! She's been seeing a concession owner on the sly! I won't tell you who, because . . ."

"You're lying!" Ricardi shouted. "I don't believe it!"

"Okay," Looney shrugged. "That's your prerogative! Only . . . I'd keep my eye on her if I were you."



Of course, Zolotow'd lied. But, still, he'd successfully instilled that little spark of doubt and jealousy into Ricardi's mind which glowed brighter and brighter until it caused his hand to tremble ever so slightly when he went into his act.

"Remember what I told you, Marja," Zolotow cowered behind the board during the next performance. "If the knives come close, it's because Ricardi wants to get rid of you! There's a little dancer down the midway he's been seeing!"



"No! You're joking, Mr. Zolotow! Tell me you're joking. Ricardi wouldn't . . ." Marja whimpered.

"It would be so easy," Zolotow went on. "An accident. Who would know? And then he and that little dancing girl . . . Well, I'd watch those knives if I were you, Marja! Before it's too late!"



I'm telling you this, all of it, because I want you to know exactly what kind of a man Looey Zolotow was. I want you to know just why the freaks hated him so. So that you'll understand.

The little joke he'd played on the Ricardis had its effect. At the next afternoon's performance, Ricardi's infallible aim had vanished. The first knife he hurled nicked Marja's arm. She ran from the stage, sobbing.



Marja left the carnny that night. And Ricardi came to Zolotow, his eyes red from crying.

"It's your fault!" he whined. "You broke me up! With those lies about her!"

"Watch yourself, Ricardi," Zolotow hissed, "or you'll be looking for a new carnny! Get wise! She left you because she was scared! She figured you were on to her, and those knives were getting too close for comfort! Forget her!"



Ricardi broke down. He sobbed softly. "What'll I do?" He shook his head sadly. "What'll I do?"

"Don't worry, Ricardi!" Zolotow grinned. "I know where I can find a new partner for you for your act. I've got just the girl in mind. She's a little dancing girl . . . down the midway . . ."

Marja came back to the carnival the last night before it was scheduled to move on. Maybe she wanted to make up, I don't know. I saw her in the crowd and was at her side when Ricardi went into his act. Marja watched with tears in her eyes.

"The little dancing girl . . ." she whispered to no one in particular. ". . . from down the midway! Then . . . it's true! It's all . . . true!"

She turned, sobbing, and pushed through the crowd.



There was nothing I could do. Zolotow's little joke had now been carried to its extreme. Marja left the carnival grounds crying, and never came back. And even I began to dislike the evil Freak Show owner.

Then, one evening, Ricardi invited me to the Freak Show's chow table.

"It was good of you to come, Mr. Hastings," Ricardi smiled.

"It was good of you to ask me, Ricardi. I . . ."

"FANNY!" Zolotow's snarl interrupted me.

Fanny, the Fat Lady, froze, the spoon in her hand. Corpus, the Armless and Legless Boy, paled, wide-eyed. Zolotow's face turned livid.

"How many times have I told you not to feed Corpus?" he screamed. "How many times have I told you to let him eat by himself?"

"But, Mr. Zolotow," Fanny stammered. "He . . . he can't eat by himself! Not unless he eats like an . . . an animal! And he's not an animal! He's . . ."



"He'll feed himself!" Zolotow's voice quavered. "Or perhaps you'd like to feed him while you're both looking for jobs!"

"I'm sorry, Corpus," Fanny turned to him with a helpless expression.

"I understand, Fanny. It's all right," said Corpus.



An uncomfortable silence fell over the table. I had suddenly lost my appetite. I was horrified at Zolotow's inhumanity.

The rest of the freaks continued to eat, but Corpus just sat there, head bowed, eyeing his food.

Zolotow leaped to his feet. "Feed yourself, Corpus," he snarled. "Like this!" And he pushed the poor boy's face into the plate.



Suddenly, Ricardi moved. His hand shot to his pocket as he rose, and he whipped out a knife. The blade flashed open with a resounding click.

"Leave him alone, Zolotow," he cried.

Looney spun around and his face went white.

"Put down that knife, Ricardi," he hissed.

"Don't you ever torment that boy again, or I *will* put down this knife, Zolotow," Ricardi whispered, his voice shaking. ". . . Right through your ugly skull!"



I was dumbstruck . . . frozen with horror . . . powerless to move as I watched the ensuing scene. Looney flushed beet-red. His eyes blazed. He had been made a fool of in front of his entire troupe. He wouldn't stand for that. Not Looney Zolotow.

He rushed to the corner of the tent and scooped up two irons that the Fire-Eater had been heating for the evening performance. They were white-hot.

"Threaten me with a knife, will you?" he growled. "I'll teach you!"



It was all over before I could do anything to stop it. Zolotow rushed at Ricardi as the freaks and I watched, paralyzed with horror, and rammed the white hot irons into his face . . . his eyes.

Ricardi's screams of agony echoed up and down the evening midway.

"You crazy fool!" I managed to finally choke out. "You've . . . blinded him!"



"He had it coming," gasped Zolotow, staring down at the writhing knife-thrower.

Ricardi lay on the tanbark floor of the tent, his face cupped in his arms, shrieking. The smell of burned flesh filled the air. I felt a sudden wave of nausea sweep over me, and I stumbled toward the entrance, seeking a breath of fresh air.

"Somebody get a doctor," Fanny was sobbing. "Somebody get a doctor!"



In a little while, the carnival grounds rang with the sound of police and ambulance sirens. The white-coated interns came and took Ricardi away, and the police questioned Zolotow and the freaks.

Zolotow pleaded self-defense. Ricardi had pulled a knife on him and he'd protected himself. He was sorry that he'd blinded him, but . . .



The freaks, of course, were too terrorized to say anything to the contrary. They corroborated Zolotow's story.

Ricardi was sent to the local hospital, and when he was released, his case was dismissed for lack of evidence. The carnival had moved on, and Zolotow had not appeared to press charges.



Can you imagine? Ricardi . . . begging Zolotow's forgiveness? It made me sick. And it was all I could do to keep from tearing the fat Freak Show owner apart when I heard him answer Ricardi:

"Get out! Get out, Ricardi! You're through! Washed up! Finished! You can't do an act . . . blind! Get out and don't come back!"



After his release, Ricardi followed the carnival route until he caught up with it.

He came down the deserted midway one night, tapping a new white cane ahead of him, his eyes swathed in bandages. He came looking for Looey Zolotow.

"I need work, Looey," he whined. "I'm sorry about everything! Really I am! Give me a job, Looey! Please?"

He stood there with his blind eyes and begged forgiveness.



But I wasn't the only one who was steamed. I saw the faces of the freaks that had gathered around. I saw the looks in their eyes, and I knew what was going through their minds as they watched Ricardi turn and make his way slowly back down the midway.

I knew that their hearts went out to the poor blind knife-thrower as mine did.



It was a week later that I went to Fanny, the Fat Lady's tent to ask if she'd heard anything from Ricardi since that night he'd come back to the carnival. As I pulled back the flap, a figure melted into the shadows. But one look at the white of the bandage over his eyes was enough.

"Ricardi," I gasped. "What are you doing here?"

"Who . . . who is it?" Ricardi hissed.

"It's me, Ricardi! Mr. Hastings! What are you doing here in Fanny's tent?"

"Hiding, Mr. Hastings," Ricardi edged out of the shadows. "Fanny and Xetal and Corpus and the rest are taking care of me!"

"That's good of them, Ricardi," I said.

"Yes," he went on. "They bring me food . . . and they hide me from Mr. Zolotow!"



"But, Ricardi," I reasoned. "You can't go on like this forever . . ."

"I know, Mr. Hastings. And we're working on that!"

"Working on what, Ricardi?"

"An act, Mr. Hastings! Fanny and Corpus and Xetal! They're teaching me! It's easy! Easier than I thought . . ."

"They're teaching you an act?" I couldn't believe it. "What kind of an act, Ricardi?"

"Why, throwing knives again!" Ricardi grinned eagerly. "It's easy! They just face me toward the board . . . and I try to visualize my partner!"

"Partner?"

"Oh, of course, we're only using a dummy, now! But when I get real good, then . . . maybe . . ."



Ricardi was like a little boy again. He bubbled and chattered about his new act and what a sensation it would be when he perfected it. He took me by the hand and led me out behind Fanny's tent to where a board with a stuffed dummy had been set up. And he made me face him toward it, while he threw a few knives.

He missed the board completely. Every time.



But it did not dampen his eagerness. "I'll learn, Mr. Hastings," he grinned. "I'll learn! You'll see! So, promise me you won't tell Mr. Zolotow about it, Mr. Hastings! At least not until I'm ready to show it to him! Then, maybe he might forgive me . . . and take me back . . ."



As I made my way back to my tent, I felt like I wanted to cry. The freaks had done wonders with Ricardi. He bore no malice. He wanted only to work again. And he had such confidence in himself.

"I wonder if it could be possible?" I whispered into the midway wind. "If Ricardi could go on again? Throwing his knives. Blind?"



I did not see Ricardi again until one afternoon about a month later. The freaks had kept him well-hidden. He stumbled into my office, his face beaming. The bandages were gone.

"Tonight, Mr. Hastings! I'm going to perform tonight! Fanny told me Mr. Zolotow would see my act tonight! You come too! Please!"

"I'll be there, Ricardi," I said. "I wouldn't miss this for anything!"



And I meant what I said. That night, I made my way to the Freak Tent. The audition had already started when I entered, for I heard the sounds of gay laughter and hearty applause.

"Good shot, Ricardi," Fanny squealed. "Bravo," cried Xetal.

I watched, fascinated. I had come in behind the backboard and I could see their faces. The freaks. They were smiling. Laughing. It had been so long since I'd seen any of them smile.

"A little higher this time, Ricardi," Corpus instructed.

"Use an ice pick this time, Ricardi," said the Fire-Eater.

Ricardi was smiling too, although it was a blank smile. A face without eyes lacks so much expression.



Ricardi threw the ice pick. It made a dull thud as it hit. A cheer went up and the freaks applauded enthusiastically.

"Good, Ricardi," giggled Fanny. "Good!"

"Another, Ricardi! Another ice pick!" said the Fire-Eater and handed it to him.

"This time try to get it a little higher and to the right, Ricardi," Corpus instructed.

The second ice-pick was thrown. It, too, must have hit true, for the freaks roared with delight. Their applause echoed back and forth in the huge, empty Freak Tent. Although I could not see from my vantage point how accurate Ricardi was, I applauded too, from sheer joy at seeing all of them so happy.

"Someone's there . . . behind the board," gasped the Bearded Lady.



"Is that you, Mr. Hastings?" called Ricardi.

"Yes, Ricardi. It's me!"

"I'm showing Mr. Zolotow my act, Mr. Hastings. Can you see well?"

"Well enough, Ricardi. Go ahead."

I did not want to move. I had not seen such happiness among the freaks for so long, I wanted to stay where I could see their faces. There's where the real show was. Not the board.

"Now the cleaver," shrieked Corpus.

"Yes, the cleaver," howled Fanny.

I looked for Looey Zolotow. I wanted to see his expression. I knew he would go for this act. But he wasn't down in front.

"Where's Looey, Ricardi?" I asked.

"He's watching, isn't he?" Ricardi grinned.

"Sure, Ricardi! Sure he's watching," said Fanny, handing him the cleaver.



The cleaver landed with a dull thud. And suddenly, my blood ran cold. I heard an unmistakable groan. I looked down.

There was a pool of blood at the base of the backboard!

A nausea swept over me.

The freaks had gagged and tied Looey Zolotow to the board. And Ricardi's aim had been horribly bad . . . or good, as the case may be. He'd rarely missed! The freaks had guided him well!

"Sure, he's watching," giggled Fanny. "Now, one more cleaver and your act will be over, Ricardi!"

"Lord have mercy on them," I whispered as I stumbled away.



THE END

REQUIEM



Mr. Jeremy was quite spent. He had been rather short of breath of late, and so he leaned upon his shovel and watched while Parks dug on, his slight, neatly-clad body and fine, sensitive face in such marked contrast with Parks's heavy muscles and flat features.

The cemetery was dark and very still, so that the sounds of Parks's shovel made a soft chush-chush-chush, easily audible. Mr. Jeremy liked the sound.

He liked to think of it as a sort of requiem; a sort of final contact between the living and the dead. Mr. Stevens, the undertaker, thought that *he* was the last link between Masonville's citizens and those they buried, but Mr. Stevens was wrong! And a lot Mr. Jeremy could tell the whole town about Mr. Stevens! About cheap shrouds substituted for expensive ones, about corpses carelessly tossed into their caskets!

But of course, Mr. Jeremy never would tell the town. How could he? Then they would know that *he* was a grave robber!

Though Mr. Jeremy was a grave robber, he was a sensitive man, not at all brutalized by his calling. Did he not hum a little tune silently in his head, even now?

Heigh-ho, it is a dreary business, a dreary business by far . . .

But the dead are dead, and the living must live, and that's the way things are . . .

But Parks had uncovered the casket now . . . the casket buried only this afternoon with such tears and lamentations.



Time was of the essence in Mr. Jeremy's profession. A grave, newly dug, could be opened and re-closed with no one the wiser. While a grave left untouched for some time might be overgrown with weeds or covered with vines tenderly planted. To replace the sod upon such a grave was a delicate task, most time-consuming.

Mr. Jeremy shuddered. Parks was such an unfeeling brute. He had pried open the lid of the casket with his spade, and Mr. Jeremy distinctly heard the small snapping noise.



Old Mrs. Price, in the coffin, had had brittle bones and Parks had no doubt experienced difficulty in removing the big, old-fashioned amethyst ring from her rigid finger.

Amethysts brought small prices these days, but the ring together with the diamond ear-bobs in her pierced ears would make the evening worth while.

Definitely a depressing business. But . . . *Heigh-ho, the living must live . . .*

"Ugly old biddy, wasn't she?" muttered Parks.



Ugly? Ah, me! Mr. Jeremy sighed. He could remember Mrs. Price when she was young and soft and all the bachelors in Masonville courted her. So prim . . . so dignified. But where was her dignity now, with Parks straddling her coffin and grinning at her in the darkness?

Mr. Jeremy was about to chide Parks, but he was still short of breath. And Parks was not one to be abashed by words concerning the dignity of the dead. Parks was sexton of the cemetery, and callous.

Had it really been almost twenty years since Mr. Jeremy had found Parks in his cups one night and delicately broached the subject of opening graves for a profit?

But . . . yes, it had been. Almost twenty years! Mr. Jeremy's heaving lungs and white locks and those confounded tooth-aches attested to that. Ah, well . . .

"Finish up," said Mr. Jeremy, turning to leave.

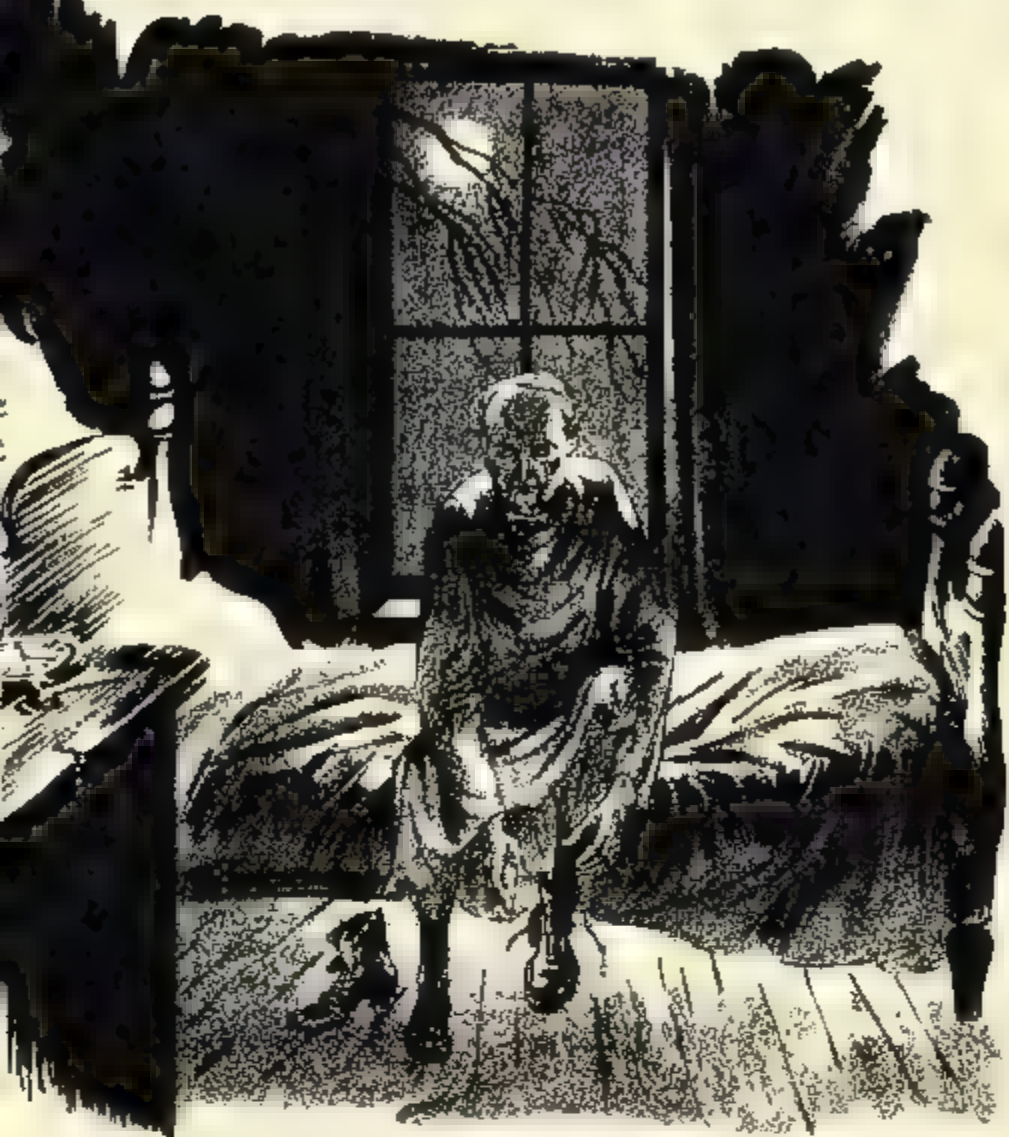
"My money first," said Parks.

"After I sell the stones!"

So petty. So mercenary. The clod! Mr. Jeremy detested Parks.

Mr. Jeremy went home, washed carefully, and went to bed, exhausted.

He would have to take better care of himself. Really he would. There was this breathlessness of late, and that annoying tooth he had meant to have attended . . .



The dentist was kind in the morning. Everyone was kind to Mr. Jeremy, as people always are kind to elders who smile and are gentle and pat the heads of playing children as they pass.

"This filling will have to be replaced," said the dentist. "And this one. And this. I'm afraid it will be rather expensive, but . . . we'll work something out."



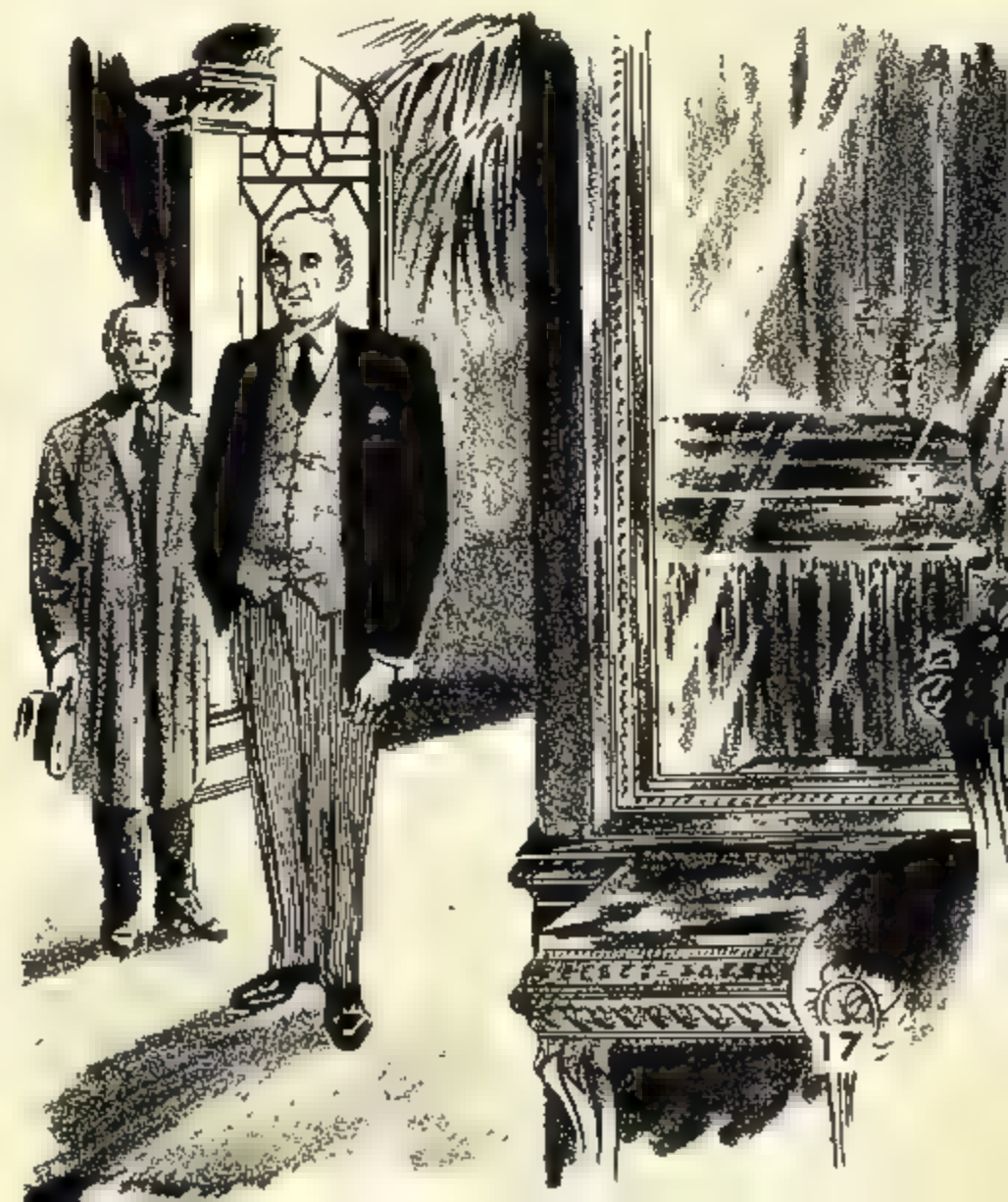
Oh, my, yes, the dentist was very kind. It was common knowledge that Mr. Jeremy lived on a small pension. But Mr. Jeremy smiled and ordered the best. After all, the dentist would be paying for it himself, in a way.

It had only been some six months since Mr. Jeremy had unearthed the body of the dentist's ten year old daughter . . . dead of pneumonia, poor little thing . . . and removed from her wasted neck her deceased mother's emerald brooch, sentimentally interred with her by her father . . .

But . . . heigh-ho . . .



Afterwards, Mr. Jeremy walked the sunlit streets of Masonville and watched the children playing. It was such a pleasant afternoon. It seemed a shame to spoil it with business. But one must be practical. Toward evening, he strolled past the funeral parlor and stopped to chat with Mr. Stevens. Any deaths today? Any corpses?



Mr. Stevens shook his head. No luck there. Mr. Jeremy strolled on. And suddenly, he gasped at the fire in his chest. Suddenly he leaned for support against the trunk of an old elm, fighting the nausea which overwhelmed him.



It was his heart, of course. After he had come to himself a bit, Mr. Jeremy went directly to Doctor Blaine's. Poor Doctor Blaine! The funeral wreath was still on the door, though his dear wife had been gone for almost a month now.



The Blaines had been such a devoted couple. Mr. Jeremy had actually regretted the necessity when he and Parks had dug up her corpse and removed her diamond wedding band . . . the one the doctor had given her on their twenty-fifth anniversary. Many a pleasant evening Mr. Jeremy had spent in her house. But . . . *Heigh-ho* . . .



The doctor shook his head. "I won't lie to you, Jeremy," he said. "It's bad. A leaky heart valve. You can live for quite a while . . . or you can go tomorrow. All I can advise is that you live moderately. And you already do that. I'm sorry."

Doctor Blaine gave Mr. Jeremy a small vial of pills. "To be taken in case of any sudden nausea or pain," he instructed.



But the verdict was apparent. Mr. Jeremy had little time left. And so, he began to think.

Mr. Jeremy was a clever man. But he had never thought along these lines before. Death had always been close, but never a personal thing to him. It was different now. When Parks came to him the next day with the news, he shook his head.

"No, you say?" Oh, Parks was a surly, greedy hulk. "Maybe you didn't understand me! I said old man Price is dead!"

"He's laid out in Stevens's place right now. I talked to Stevens," Parks's eyes gleamed, "and he's being buried with his diamond ring and that platinum watch the clerks at his bank gave him!"

"I heard you!" Mr. Jeremy attempted a stratagem. "But . . . well, listen, Parks. Price was a friend of mine. An old friend. Perhaps, just this once, it would be just as well to permit the corpse to rest in peace . . ."



"Friend? *Friend?*" Suddenly Parks was laughing. Roaring. "You!? Talking about friends!"

Then, just as suddenly, Parks was no longer laughing. "You old hypocrite! You want him all for yourself, don't you? Friends! Hah! You'd steal the pennies off your dead mother's eyes! And so would I! We're two of a kind! We share and share alike!"



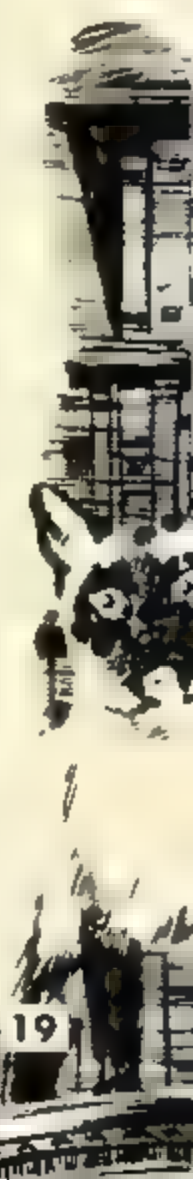
In the end, Mr. Jeremy tried to tell Parks about his heart. But of course Parks didn't believe it. So Mr. Jeremy had to promise to be at the cemetery that night. And after he'd gone, Parks's words lingered in Mr. Jeremy's head.

"And so would I! We're two of a kind!"

Mr. Jeremy shook himself. The indignity of it! To die . . . to be laid to rest . . . and then to be dug up and stripped of whatever valuables loved ones had seen fit to inter with you! An unpleasant prospect! Why, the man had no conscience!

No conscience at all, Mr. Jeremy learned that night. Parks was waiting when he arrived. Together, they went to where the freshly turned earth lay heaped in a new grave mound. Together, they dug . . . until the rich casket was exposed. Price had been a wealthy man; the town banker. A man respected. A man treated with awe by the people of Masonville. But there was little that was awesome about Mr. Price now. And Parks was annoyed with Mr. Jeremy.

After he had taken the ring and the platinum watch, Parks bent one of Price's stiff arms double, thumb to nose . . .



"No! Don't!" Mr. Jeremy was shocked.

"Don't?" Parks's voice was soft, but threatening. Definitely threatening. As if, after all these years of taking orders from Mr. Jeremy, the worm had finally turned. As if he were demonstrating a point to Mr. Jeremy. "Why not? Him and his airs! I don't like people who take on airs . . . who think they're better than other people!"

"Meaning me?" said Mr. Jeremy.

Parks shrugged. "If the shoe fits, wear it! Just remember! We're partners!"



Mr. Jeremy felt ill. Partners, yes . . . now! But what about after? Mr. Jeremy could picture himself buried . . . and Parks's spade biting through the earth, prying up the lid of his coffin . . .

"Better buy a couple of new spades tomorrow," Parks snapped. "Long-handled! I'm sick of digging with these. They break your back!"

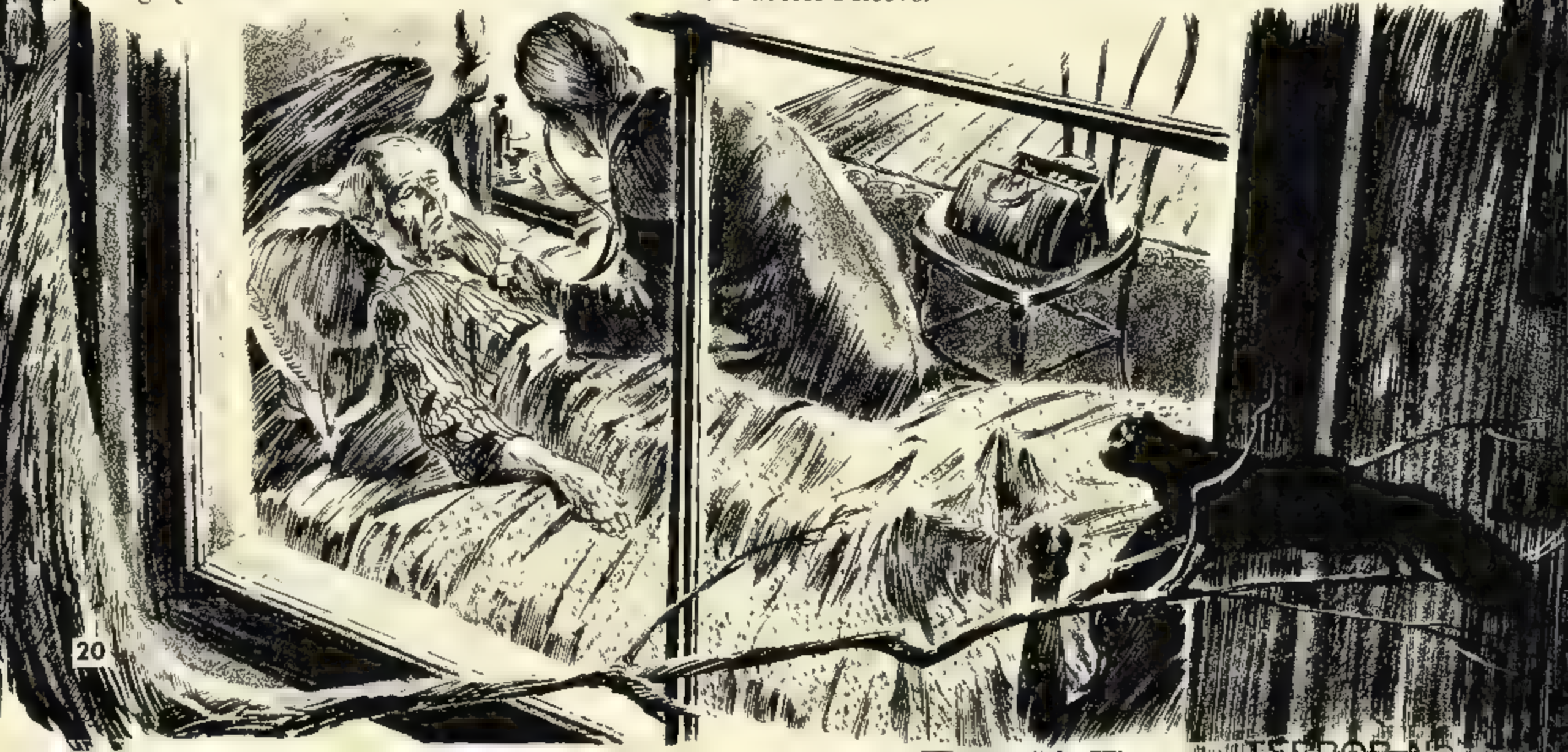
"You're not going to leave him like that?" cried Mr. Jeremy.

"Just like that!" Parks's laugh was coarse, vulgar. "Maybe you can go soft about a 'friend'! Me, I'm different!"



Oh, yes, Parks was different. Mr. Jeremy took a pill. All at once there was a nausea within him. But the pill did little good. He was still sick in the morning. Quite sick.

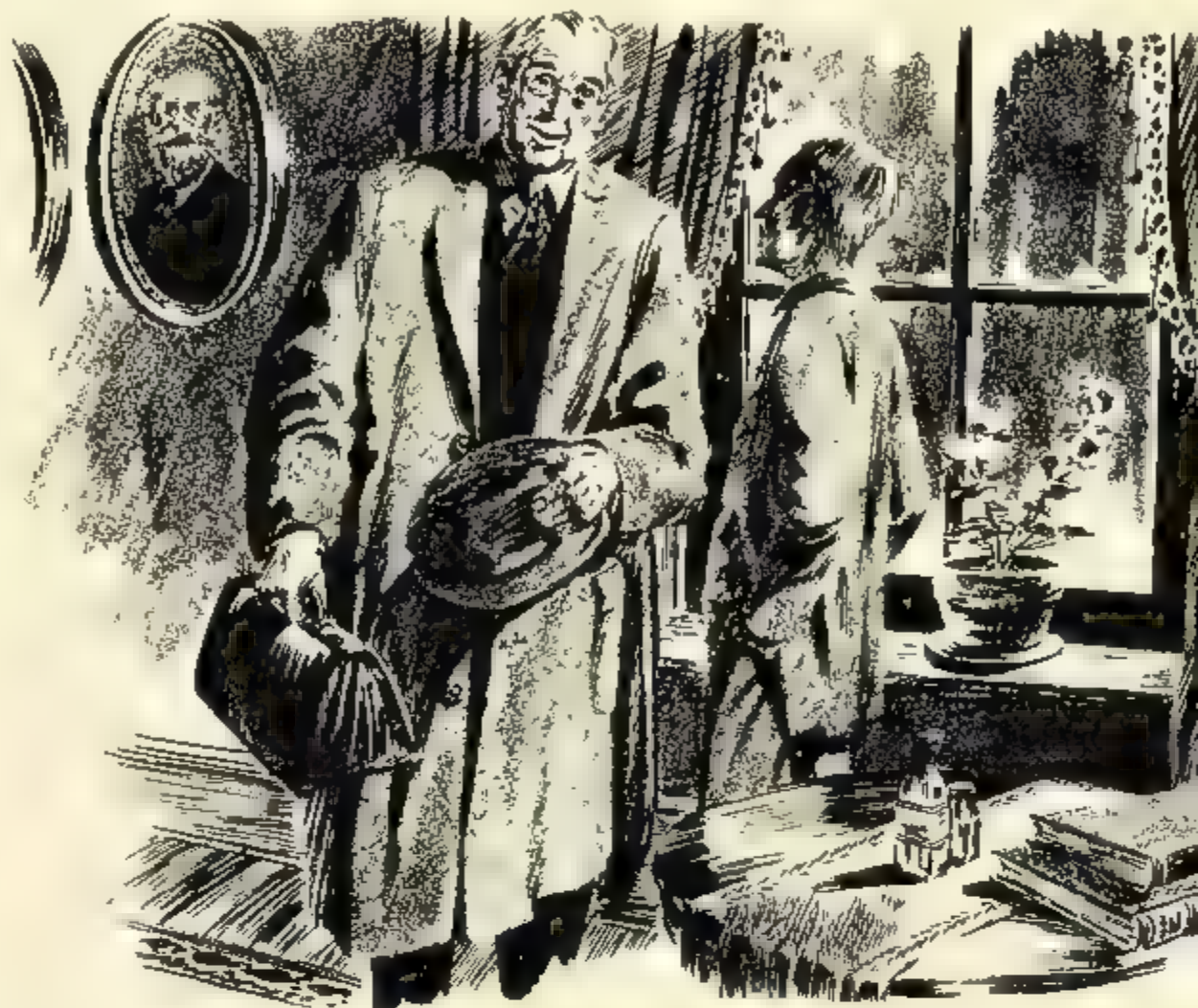
It took all of Dr. Blaine's ministrings to bring Mr. Jeremy around. He worked hard, trying this, trying that, trying to keep the breath of life in Mr. Jeremy's body. And all the while, Mr. Jeremy's eyes were upon the black mourning band sewn 'round the doctor's sleeve.



Not that Mr. Jeremy felt any twinges of remorse. One does not feel remorse concerning something which has become a way of life. Mr. Jeremy was only remembering: When he and Parks had opened the coffin in which the doctor's wife lay, Parks had become impatient in his efforts to remove the wedding band from her stiff finger. He'd raised his spade and brought it, slashing, down.

Parks! Parks! Parks! Mr. Jeremy could think of nothing else. Parks . . . opening *his* grave! Parks . . . doing unspeakable things to *him*!

The doctor was astonished when Mr. Jeremy recovered . . . or seemed to. But then, he knew nothing of the indomitable will which lifted Mr. Jeremy from his sickbed. The doctor, poor man, mentally congratulated himself on having performed a near miracle.



Mr. Jeremy had things to do. Painfully, slowly, so as not to place any undo strain in his rapidly beating heart, Mr. Jeremy donned his dignified clothing one morning and set out.

Stevens, the undertaker, greeted him warmly. But Mr. Jeremy was not visiting for the sake of exchanging small talk. He came directly to the point. He'd come to arrange a funeral.

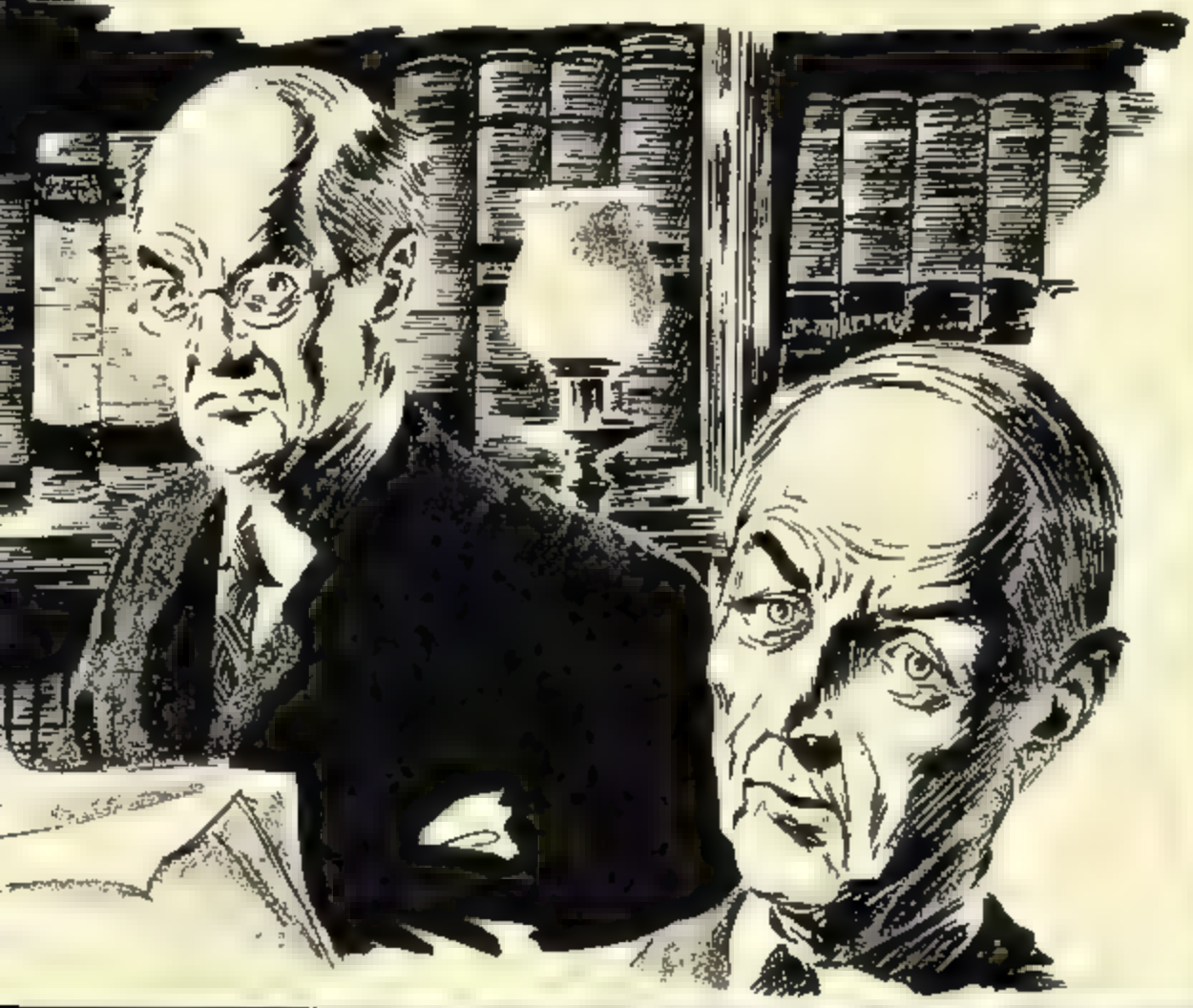
"After all," he said, smiling wanly, "I'm not getting any younger."

Mr. Jeremy haggled. Not from lack of funds, but because of Parks. The casket he choose was of pine. The least expensive in Stevens's stock. No satin cushions. No bronze handles. Nothing, in a word, worth the effort it would cost Parks to disinter him. Mr. Jeremy intended to make certain.



Later, he visited his attorney. Mr. Jeremy had never considered a will to be essential. He had neither kith nor kin to mourn his passing. But a will seemed quite essential now.

"I am to be buried in my cheapest, most worn clothes," he instructed. "No jewelry, nothing of value."



Before nightfall, the town was already mourning Mr. Jeremy's passing, though the man still lived. If a man is so certain of death, those who surround him are not apt to question. And all knew of Mr. Jeremy's visits to the doctor . . . the doctor's visits to him.

Still, Mr. Jeremy did not die. Mr. Jeremy went on living. Nor did he neglect himself. Had not the doctor said he might live for years? Mr. Jeremy went on with his visits to the dentist . . . with his tender care of his aged carcass.

It was after one of his visits to the dentist that he met Parks. Parks grinned and said, "I heard about the will and the coffin. Getting ready? Playing it safe, aren't you?"

"Safe?" Mr. Jeremy acted innocent.

"Cheap coffin, no jewelry . . ." Parks had guessed. Parks was shrewd, as rats are sometimes shrewd. And amused. There was no point in Mr. Jeremy trying to deceive him.

"I've been making sure," said Mr. Jeremy, "that when I die, I'll be left alone. You wouldn't be fool enough to dig up a corpse without hope of profit."

"Sure, sure." Parks's smile was somehow lascivious. "But speaking of profit, I just came by the Willoughby house. I talked to Doc Blaine. The Willoughby kid probably won't last the day!"

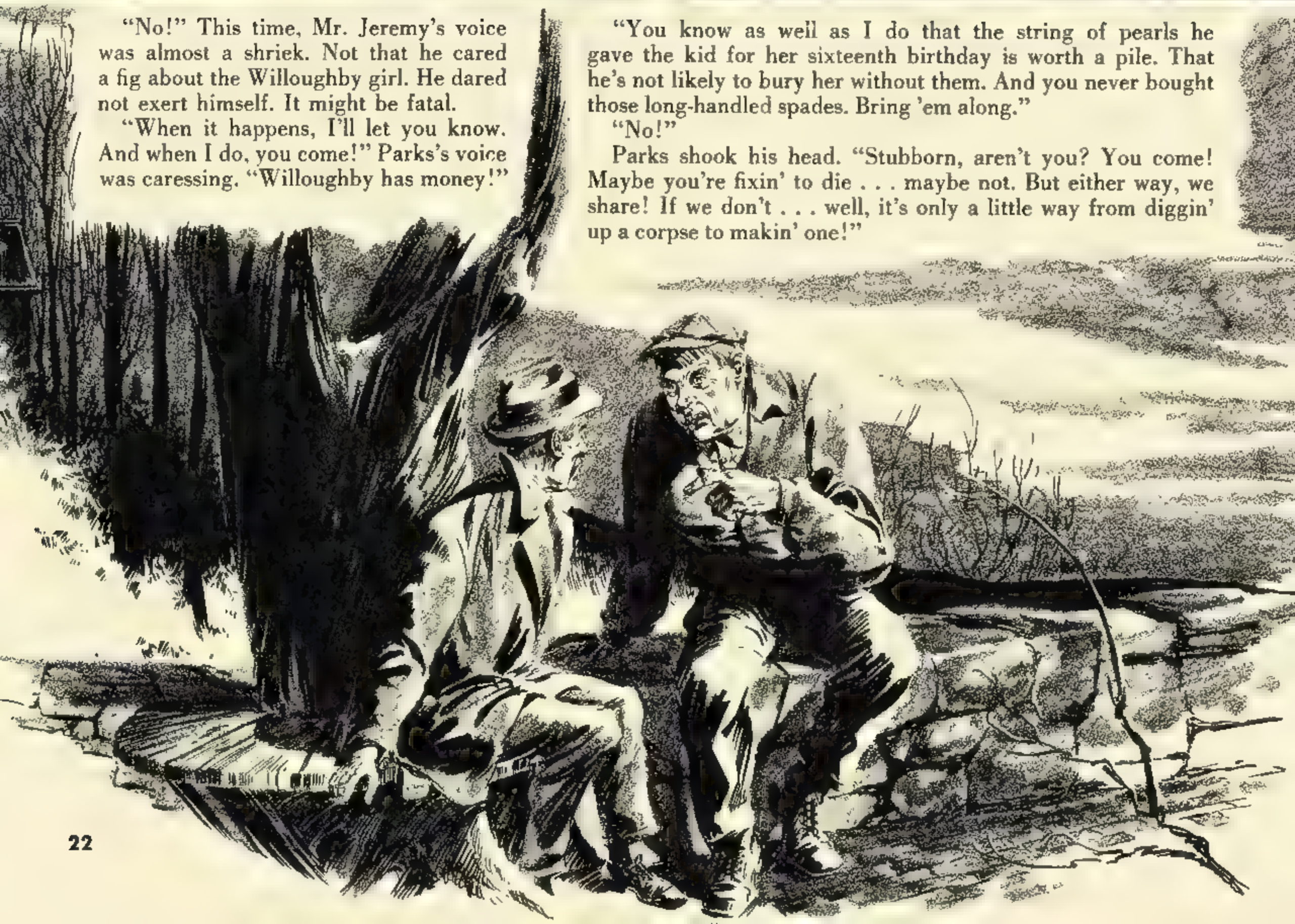
"No!" This time, Mr. Jeremy's voice was almost a shriek. Not that he cared a fig about the Willoughby girl. He dared not exert himself. It might be fatal.

"When it happens, I'll let you know. And when I do, you come!" Parks's voice was caressing. "Willoughby has money!"

"You know as well as I do that the string of pearls he gave the kid for her sixteenth birthday is worth a pile. That he's not likely to bury her without them. And you never bought those long-handled spades. Bring 'em along."

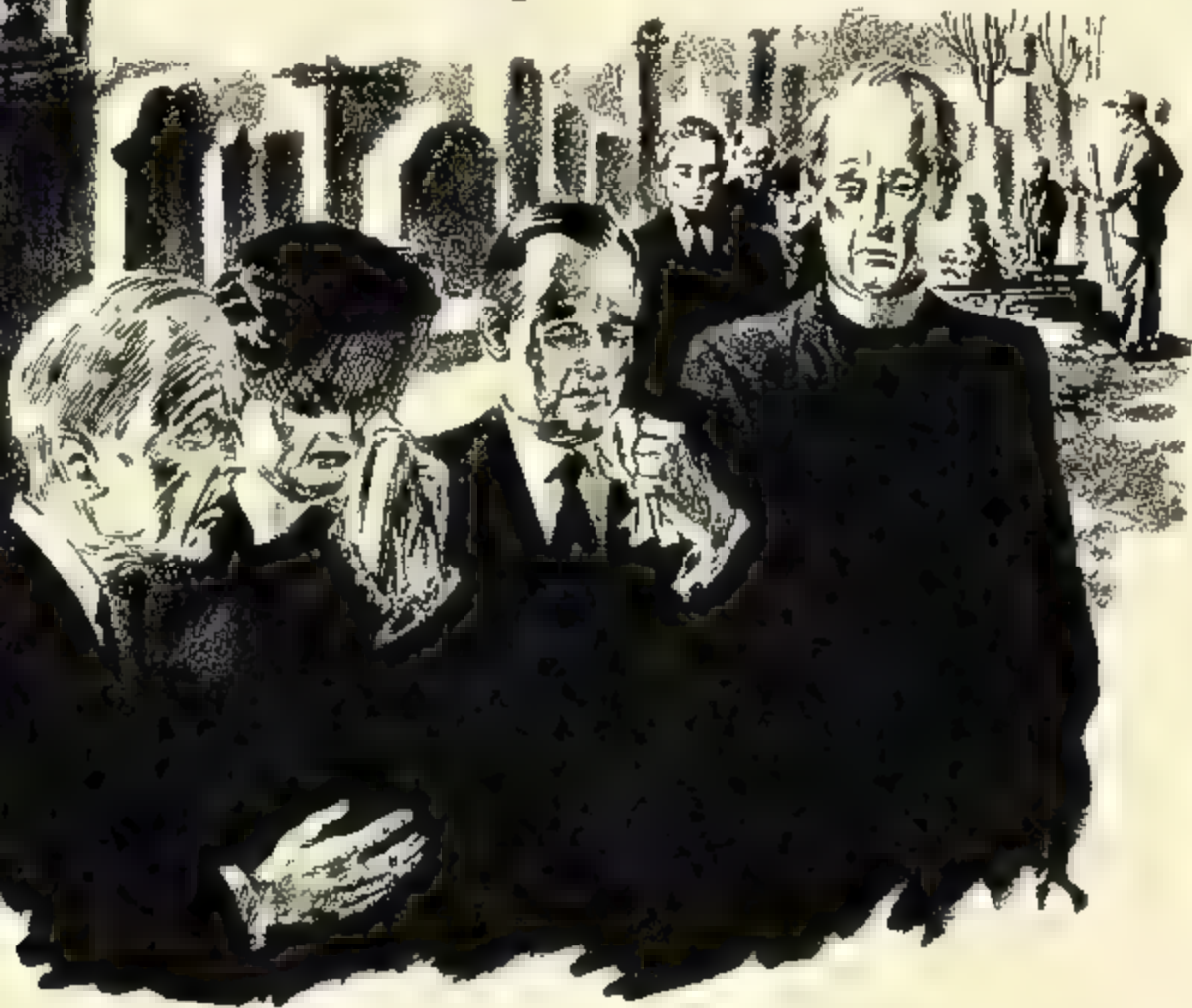
"No!"

Parks shook his head. "Stubborn, aren't you? You come! Maybe you're fixin' to die . . . maybe not. But either way, we share! If we don't . . . well, it's only a little way from diggin' up a corpse to makin' one!"



Mr. Jeremy knew that Parks would not hesitate to kill, and that he still did not understand. Parks still suspected that Mr. Jeremy was somehow trying to cheat him. So there was really no way out. Mr. Jeremy purchased the new spades that afternoon.

And the Willoughby girl died the next morning. Mr. Jeremy attended the funeral. A pityful sight, with the girl's parents weeping bitterly. Mr. Jeremy was most consoling.



But being a practical man, Mr. Jeremy did not attempt to find an escape for himself. There was none. So . . . *Heigh-ho, it is a dreary business . . .*

He presented himself at the cemetery gate-house that night with the two new spades, and he and Parks dug by the light of the moon. But, dig slowly as he might, the work was hard for Mr. Jeremy. Long before the new casket had been uncovered, he was breathing heavily and there was a dull ache in his side.



He was hardly interested when Parks opened the coffin and found the pearls, gleaming white against the more intense whiteness of the corpse's throat. Mr. Jeremy had dangled the Willoughby girl upon his knee in years gone by, but what did that matter now?

. . . The dead are dead and the living must live . . .

Only, Mr. Jeremy was dying. He fell to one knee on the fresh earth, clutching his heart.



Parks looked up startled, and read the truth in Mr. Jeremy's pallid face. He worked swiftly after that, closing up the grave. Then he took Mr. Jeremy by the arm and half-led, half-dragged him away. It would never do to have Mr. Jeremy found in the cemetery.



At the door to his house, Mr. Jeremy rallied for a moment. He looked around for Parks and saw him, dimly, through a mist. Parks was staring at him.

"You really meant it," he said stupidly. "You really are sick!"

"I'm . . . already dead," gasped Mr. Jeremy. "But my dying . . . won't mean profit to you. Remember! There won't be . . . anything in my coffin! Only . . . me . . ."



Parks said nothing. Only Mr. Jeremy thought he saw him smile. Then the night spun crazily and Mr. Jeremy fell. But, dying, he was content. They would take him to the cemetery quietly, in dignity, and in dignity, place him below the sod. And he would rest, undisturbed. He'd made certain . . .

... The dead are dead ...



And Mr. Jeremy was quite right. Masonville buried him quietly, with dignity. He smiled in his coffin under the earth, at rest.

Until the sound of metal on wood heralded the approach of something living. And after a while, a new, long-handled spade ripped the pine lid from Mr. Jeremy's simple casket and Parks stood grinning down at Mr. Jeremy's smile.



Mr. Jeremy had overlooked something.

From his pocket, Parks took a pair of heavy pliers, and bent, humming to his work.

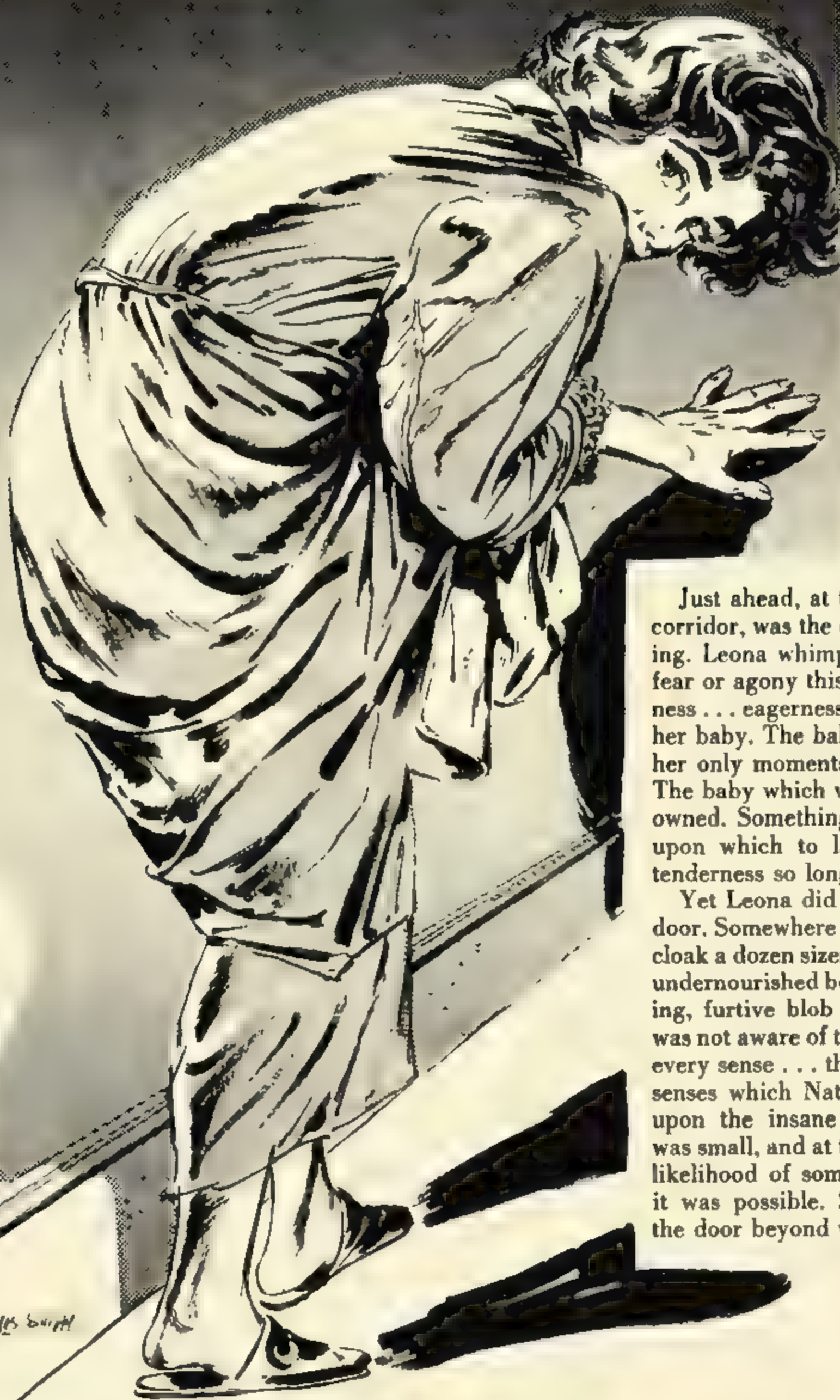
There was quite a large amount of gold in those new fillings the dentist had put in Mr. Jeremy's teeth.

Heigh-ho ...



THE END

Mother Love



Just ahead, at the end of the dimly lit corridor, was the door she had been seeking. Leona whimpered a little. Not from fear or agony this time, but from tenderness . . . eagerness. Beyond that door was her baby. The baby they had taken from her only moments after she had born it. The baby which was the doll she'd never owned. Something truly her own at last, upon which to lavish all the love and tenderness so long locked up within her.

Yet Leona did not rush blindly to the door. Somewhere she had found a nurse's cloak a dozen sizes too large for her small, undernourished body. She made a crouching, furtive blob as she moved, but she was not aware of that. She tip-toed slowly, every sense . . . the sharp, overdeveloped senses which Nature sometimes bestows upon the insane . . . alert. The hospital was small, and at this hour there was little likelihood of someone chancing by. But it was possible. So she crept slowly to the door beyond which was her baby . . .

She stood for a long time in the room, staring at her baby through the tears that filled her eyes. It was so small, so pink and white. When she picked it up, when she held it tight against her breast beneath the voluminous cloak, it seemed to her that her heart would burst. The wordless crooning that came softly from her lips was ageless, infinite.



But then there was no more time for tenderness. The hospital would be stirring soon. She found the front door and stepped into the small-town street.

That way! Leona remembered. When Clint had brought her, moaning and writhing in her agony, he had driven his splintered wagon up the street from the south. That meant the swamp lay that way.

Leona was a shadow, flitting down the deserted sidewalks, hugging her baby.



A mile down the highway which led out of town, there was a dirt road that turned off into the trees. That was where Clint had stopped the wagon to curse at her, to tell her to stop her eternal whining. She remembered. That was where he'd struck her one final blow, his calloused fingers slamming against her mouth, cutting off her moan of pain. She could remember so little. Yet, somehow, through the haze, she could remember everything that Clint had done to her. Everything!



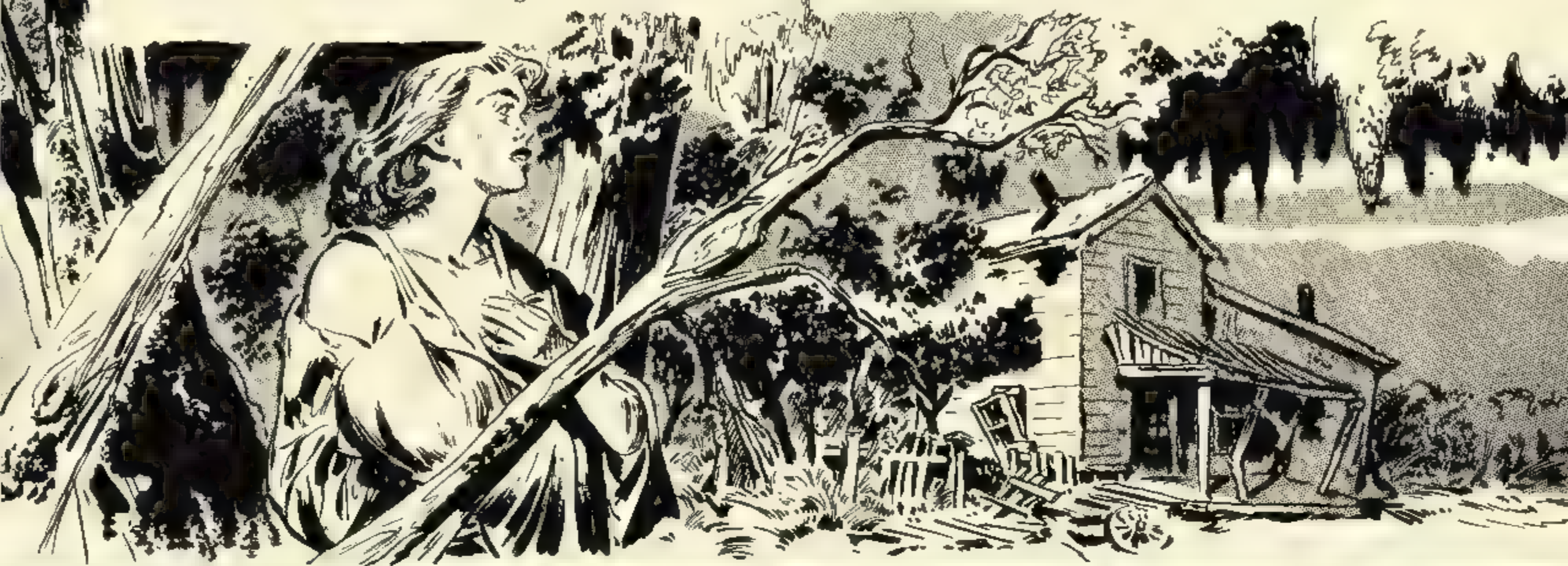
The dirt road turned wet, and became mud. Ahead was the great swamp. The road vanished, after a while, and Leona did not know the safe trails.

Leeches clung to her legs, fattened on her blood, and dropped off. Muddy, brackish water, sometimes hip deep, stained her stolen dress. Vines and creepers ripped and scratched her. But these things were old acquaintances to Leona. She had been born in the swamp. She went on, cradling her baby beneath the protecting cloak.



Many times during the night, she stopped to look at her baby, to watch its tiny arms move, to croon senseless words of endearment to it. But always, that other urge, that other drive was there. By morning, she was standing beside the gnarled sycamore, whose tormented roots thrust themselves up out of the spongy ground not fifty yards from the cabin she had shared with Clint for so long.

Now she became cautious. No smoke poured from the mud chimney of the cabin. Nothing moved. She walked softly, carefully. It would not do to have Clint know that she was there . . . that she had returned. Not until she was ready. She wanted to surprise him, to see his face when he saw their baby for the first time. That was important.



But the cabin was empty. Clint wasn't there. He was probably out in the swamp, trapping. Leona slipped out of the filthy cloak. Then she sat, rocking, holding her child in her arms, waiting. Remembering.

Yes, she could remember everything about Clint, right from that very first day. The day Clint and her father had gotten drunk together . . .

* * * * *

"Leona! Get out here and kiss your bridegroom!" her father had snarled in his drunken stupor. And that was how she'd met Clint.



Dumbly, obediently, she'd risen from the ragged blankets that served as her bed and came out of her father's cabin into the damp swamp night air. The words had meant nothing to her then. But to disobey meant a beating. So she'd stood, a moment later, not comprehending, while the big man with the thick-featured unshaven face walked around her, his bleary eyes traveling over her, grinning.

"She ain't smart, but she cooks good . . . an' she ain't a bad looker, eh, Clint?" Her father had been eager, anxious. "She'll make a good wife!"



"Yeah?" Clint had grinned stupidly. "Le'see . . ."

He'd reached out to pull her close to his sweating body, to fasten his mouth on hers.

And the reek of cheap whiskey had choked Leona . . . gagged her.



She'd struggled, and Clint had let her go, still grinning. But with a difference in his grin. With his pale eyes slitted in hungry anticipation.

"Spunky, eh?" he'd hissed. "Well, we'll fix that! Yeah! We'll sure fix that!"

"Twenty dollars ain't so much, Clint!" Her father had held out a half-filled bottle. "Come on, drink up, an' we'll call it a deal, huh?"



"Twenty dollars? For a gal that ain't got no more sense in her head than a three year old?"

"A woman don't need sense in the swamp! All she needs is a strong back!"

It had meant nothing to Leona when they haggled. But in the end, when half a dozen filthy dog-eared greenbacks had changed hands and Clint had started leading her toward his wagon, she'd been afraid. Afraid of this big man who looked at her so strangely. So she'd held back.



And she'd learned that this man was not like her father. Her father's blows were heavy when he rained them on her. They hurt. But this man's hand was a hammer! It snapped her head back on her shoulders, and dropped her, dazed, to the ground with a thin trickle of scarlet running from her lips.

"That'll learn you," he'd snarled, standing over her. "When I say move, you move!"

Leona'd looked toward her father for help, but she'd seen him with the bottle tilted to his lips, the whiskey running down his stubbled chin.



Then a bruising hand was on her arm, pulling her up, dragging her toward a wagon. And she'd gone, because she was alone and helpless.

Somewhere along the way, there was a cabin where for a dollar, a swamp preacher as bearded and filthy as Clint muttered a few words, and Clint's mouth fastened over hers for the second time. Only this time, Leona did not pull away. She could still feel his hammer blow.



"You can learn, anyway, can't you?" Clint had grinned, pleased.

And that part had not been so bad. It was what had come later . . .

The nightmare began in the dirty cabin that was to be Leona's home. The night sounds, the shriek of the hunting hawk, the eternal hum of the insects, all had been counterpoint to Leona's screams when Clint had seized her.



He'd not grinned then. His eyes had been blood-shot and slitted, and he'd muttered:

"You're my wife, now! My wife! Do you understand?"

His fingers had wound themselves in her hair when she'd tried to flee his embrace.

"So you don't like me, eh? That's good!" He'd laughed. An animal laugh. "Well, I don't like things that come too easy, anyhow! Now, you c'mere . . ."

Leona had been sick in the morning. Horribly, agonizingly sick. Hurt. But Clint had been suffering the after-effects of the cheap rotten whiskey he'd consumed the night before. He'd been in no mood to hear her complaints. He'd been rat-mean. His big hands had beaten her almost senseless, so that she'd finally cooked his breakfast, dragging herself . . .

After that, it was as if that first night was a pattern. Leona learned. She learned to avoid the casual kicks, the casual slaps.

But sometimes, they were not casual. Sometimes Clint would seek her out deliberately, as if in tormenting her, he could relieve the brutal squalor which was all he had ever known. As if, in making Leona's life a horror, he could make his own less of a horror.

Not that Leona thought of her life as a horror. Her mind was not capable of that. Leona knew only that there was a lack in the scheme of things.

How could she know that what she yearned for was something to love?

Once, she made a doll out of some rags and string. Because it felt good to hold it in her arms. Clint found her sitting on the bed, cradling it. And he laughed at her.



But when she did not react, when she did not comprehend that he was ridiculing her, he tore the doll from her arms and thrust it into the pot-bellied stove to be consumed, laughing as he watched the tears stream down her face.



It was a month later that he began to look at her queerly. After she'd fainted for the first time, while she was carrying the heavy bucket of water from the well to the cabin. Suddenly, the earth had seemed to spin up to meet her. And when she'd opened her eyes, she'd been dripping wet and Clint had been standing over her, the empty bucket in his hands.

"All right! What ails you?" he'd sneered.



Leona had tried to tell him about the nausea, the pains. But her words had been disjointed. Clint had left her lying there.

And it had happened again . . . and again . . .

One night, his eyes had taken in the slight thickening of her body. And his fist had slammed down on the table in angry realization.

"A baby! That's it!" he'd shouted. "A baby! Now you won't be worth a darn to me!"



Brats were not part of Clint's plans. Before, he had been cruel, brutal. Now, he was a devil. A woman with child was not only ugly; she was useless! And he'd paid hard cash for Leona!

From then on, his blows and kicks were slyly directed, designed to inflict more than one kind of pain. Only Clint went too far. There was a time when Leona did not move from her bed. Despite the blows. A time when she lay rocking back and forth in her agony, day after day, night after night. When even Clint left her alone to suffer the tortures of the damned physically, while her poor hurt brain soared.

A baby! A little thing all her own to love and care for! Leona dreamed through her torments in a half-world that was all softness and love. Soon . . . soon . . . her child would lie in her arms, against her heart. Soon the emptiness there would be filled. Such warm, sweet thoughts.

Leona did not know that, even as she dreamed, her body writhed. But Clint knew. Knew . . . and began to be afraid. Even in the swamp, there was law. If Leona died, there would be questions. There would be those who would want to know . . . about the marks . . . the bruises.

It was almost Leona's time when he decided upon a course of action. Outside, a storm had left the swamp trails dangerous and treacherous, but it had to be risked.



When Clint hitched the horse to his wagon, he was almost glad that the trails would be dangerous. That way, there would be less chance of meeting another swamper.

Leona moaned softly when he carried her to the wagon and tumbled her into it. Her eyes were closed, hidden by the matted hair which clung to the perspiration on her face. But her eyes did not remain closed. And her moans grew louder, louder . . .



Clint's whip was a blur. There was little time. But lashing his horse did no good. The tortured beast slipped in the mud. The wheels sank again and again, so that Clint had to climb down and set his shoulder to them. By the time they reached the highway, Leona's moans were clearly audible.

"Shut up!" he snarled, slapping her hard. "Shut up, blast you! I don't want anybody askin' any questions!"



Leona was conscious then. She bit back the moans. No sound came from her as the wagon creaked up the empty streets. She hung limply in Clint's arms when he lifted her, carried her up the steps of the tiny small-town hospital.



Clint left her there on the steps, a shadow among other shadows. Let them try to figure it out! His wagon creaked back the way it had come. Leona would not be able to tell them anything. Not incoherent Leona! He was safe!



Nor *could* Leona tell them anything when they found her in the morning. The night had been long and black with pain. What little reason remained to her had gone forever, shattered into a thousand disjointed screaming fragments. Only two thoughts were left in her muddled mind. The baby . . . and Clint. One thought tender, loving . . . the other hard, hateful.

They were kind in the hospital. Gentle hands lifted Leona up, stripped off the rags she wore, bathed her. Gentle voices murmured sympathetically: "Lord! Did you ever see anything like it?" "Poor little thing!" "Why she's only a baby herself!" "A swamper, from the looks of her!"



"No!" Leona tried to scream. Her baby! They were taking it away! She tried to struggle, to fight. But the drugs, the sedatives were powerful. They kept her pressed down upon the white sheets, silent and helpless to stop them.

After a while, there were bright lights . . . a rolling stretcher . . . a bare room, dazzling in its white cleanliness . . . shiny chrome and steel instruments.

Then there was someone holding the tiny morsel of pink . . . taking it away.



It was later that Leona screamed and would not stop screaming. After they had taken her to her room. It was then that women with broad straps came and forced her back onto the iron bed, and then stood looking down at her, pityingly, shaking their heads.

They took the straps off, eventually. They came and talked to her... about herself... about her baby. But they did not bring her baby to her. And Leona knew, after a while, that they never would bring her baby to her. And so she waited.

She made no plans. There were just... just two things she had to do. The first, she'd done earlier that night. She'd crept through the silent corridors, she'd taken a dress and a nurse's cloak, and she'd found her baby...

* * * * *

Now, there was the other thing that had to be done.

Somewhere outside, a twig cracked.

Clint!

Gently, Leona placed her baby on the bed. She was waiting behind the door when Clint came into the cabin.

He was drunk again. Reeking. But even he seemed to sense that she was there.



He turned, and Leona moved forward, the kitchen knife she'd taken from the table in her hands. There was no fear in her now. She circled him, warily. And Clint turned with her, stupidly.

"You..." he muttered. "You came back! You were going to have a baby..."

His eyes focused, went past Leona, to the bed. He could see the baby now. His mouth opened... then closed.

It was then that Leona drove the knife into his throat. Clint staggered, gurgling, but she followed. The knife drove home again. Again. And again.

He slipped to the floor and she stood over him, staring down at him, feeling purged and clean and free.

It was a long time before she dropped the knife and went back to her baby on the bed.



Clint was forgotten then. The baby moved restlessly when she picked it up. Only the baby mattered. Leona held it close, content.

The troopers found her so. Two of the men who were part of the dragnet scouring the swamp for her stood in the doorway staring, sickened, at the thing which had been Clint, and at Leona and her baby.



But the doctor and the troopers who stood over Clint's body knew none of that. The doctor turned away, white. "God!" he whispered.

"Pretty messy, eh, Doc?" one of the troopers muttered. "I guess you'd better take the baby back to the hospital. We'll take the woman."

"Yes, I guess so!" The doctor nodded, but his eyes were back on Clint. "God!" he said again. "Poor devil. I wonder what he ever did to deserve winding up like that..."



She fought them when they took her baby away from her. But they had expected that. In the end, one of them held her helpless, while the other went out to the radio on their car.

Leona was quiet when the doctor came from the hospital. As if all her small store of will had been consumed in bringing her this far. She stared across the room at her baby... the only thing she had ever loved...



But there was no answer and it was growing late. The doctor had to get back to the hospital. The trooper led Leona outside and the doctor followed, carrying the baby.

The baby that was a misshapen pink and white horror. The end-product of a thousand blows and kicks. A thing to make strong men wince and turn away, moving restlessly in the jar of formaldehyde into which its grotesquely deformed body had been placed only moments after it had been still-born.

THE END



HEAD MAN



Bruce had been playing with his treasures in the attic. Only a moment before, he had been Captain Kidd, leading his trusty crew aboard a jewel-laden merchantman. But now, quite suddenly, he was nine years old again. He shivered, involuntarily, as his father's loud voice drifted up to him. Most of the town shivered when there was anger in John Emery's voice. And there was anger in it now.

Bruce could see his father below, through the louvers of the huge attic fan set in the living room ceiling. A big, thickset man who ran the town as he ran his household, with an iron fist. He was pacing back and forth before the town constable, Mr. Simpson, who sat silent in one of the room's fat easy chairs.

"Five!" John Emery was shouting. "Five children dead! Murdered! Five decapitated bodies! And what have you done about it? Nothing! I warn you, Simpson! Find the lunatic who is responsible! And fast..."

"But..." Mr. Simpson stammered.

John Lewis

Bruce felt sorry for the gaunt constable. His father never accepted excuses. Nor would he now.

"No buts!" John Emery boomed. "I want results! I put you into your job, Simpson, and I can yank you out of it! This thing is affecting my mill hands! They're scared! They're worried! It's affecting their work!" Emery paused, hulking over the constable. "I don't want to have to identify *my* son's body! I've seen five headless corpses already! That's enough!"



Bruce shivered again. The grown-ups thought he didn't know about the murders. But he'd heard them whispering.

"Make a set of temporary laws," his father went on. "See to it that no child is allowed out after sundown. Do *something*! I'll certainly see to it that my own boy stays in the house. I can't depend on you!"

"Yes, Mr. Emery," the constable rose.



He went out, his eyes shadowed, twisting his battered old felt hat in his thin hands.

Bruce returned to his treasures, considering. After all, his father hadn't yet *told* him he was forbidden to leave the house after sundown. If he went out, it wouldn't be as if he was being disobedient!

With his penknife, he pried up the attic floorboard beneath which he stored his things.



His father would disapprove of the lizard, the slingshot, and the other prized possessions which meant so much to Bruce. His father disapproved of almost everything.

He went out the back way, through the well-kept garden. Grown-ups! Huh! He was Captain Kidd, Richard the Lion-Hearted, Kit Carson! What did he have to fear? But there was something in the air. The town was too quiet, too still. Bruce didn't like it. He was glad when he spied a boy of about his age aimlessly tossing a ball against the wooden side of a mill hand's cottage.



In moments, he had made friends, and was playing a game of catch with the other boy.

It lasted only a little while, though. The afternoon shadows were lengthening and the stillness of the town was becoming thick, oppressive. The other boy's parents emerged from their home and shooed Bruce's new-found friend indoors.

"You're the Emery boy," said the mother, turning to him. "You'd better run along home, now. Your father . . ."



She bit that off. But Bruce knew. His father didn't like him playing with the children of the mill hands. They weren't good enough for him!

"Not that there's anything wrong with kids of mill hands, Bruce," he would say. "But after all, you're John Emery's son!"



It was almost dark now. Part of the way home, Bruce skipped. That was when he was on horseback. Part of the way, he walked with an exaggerated rolling gait. That was aboard a schooner in the South Seas. He was only a few blocks from home when he became aware of the shadow behind him.

The shadow was a man. That much he could see in the gloom. But when he stopped, when he waited for the shadow to catch up, the man stopped too.



Bruce quickened his pace. The shadow quickened its pace. Bruce slowed. The shadow slowed.

The panic came suddenly. Suddenly, Bruce was running. Whatever it was, whoever it was, it was after him! He ran blindly, wildly, with sudden tears of fright running down his face and into his open, gasping mouth. And the shadow followed.

If only there were someone in the street. But there was no one. No one! He was alone! Alone in the world with that! That thing that hunted him!



But home was just ahead! Run! Run! Through the gate! Up the walk! Through the door! Into the heavy, reassuring presence of his father . . . the comforting embrace of his mother's arms.

"Bruce, where have you been?" His father began a tirade, but was cut short by his mother.

"John, he's terrified!" Her arms closed tighter about him. "Darling, what is it? What happened?"

"Man . . . outside . . . ran . . . after . . . me . . ." The gasping words were strangled, quavered with fear.



There was a gun in a bureau drawer. Mr. Emery was carrying it when he went outside . . . when he met the constable coming up the walk.

"Evenin', Mr. Emery," said Mr. Simpson. "Bruce get home all right? I spotted him in town and followed him to keep an eye on him, but I guess he got scared an' ran."

"So it was *you*!" Emery's face was hidden in darkness, but his voice gave away the fact that he did not quite accept, did not quite believe the constable's words. "I see. Yes, he got home all right. Thank you . . . Mr. Simpson."



Bruce had had dreams that night. But he had the resiliency of youth. He had forgotten the incident by morning. It was only the constable after all. And Bruce liked the constable. He even felt sorry for him. The constable was . . . well . . . sort of a lonely man.

They found the sixth small pitiful corpse four days later, by the creek.

And when Bruce's father railed the constable . . . when the old guy became confused and stammered that he couldn't patrol everywhere, that actually the creek wasn't even inside the town limits . . . Bruce only wanted to be helpful. In a way, he was trying to protect the constable from his father's abuse when he said,

"Oh, but you do patrol here, Mr. Simpson! Why, I saw you by the creek only this morning, when I was playing pirate!"



Bruce did his best, but that only seemed to confuse Mr. Simpson more. The old man muttered something about how he meant that he couldn't be everywhere *all* the time, and turned away. The little crowd that had gathered parted to let him by.

"I wonder," said John Emery, watching the old guy move up the bank. "Simpson always was sort of . . . peculiar. I wonder . . ."



Lots of times, afterward, Bruce saw how people looked oddly at Mr. Simpson . . . and how oddly Mr. Simpson looked at *him*.

"Keep away from him," his father warned him. And when Bruce asked why, he added: "Never mind why! Folks in this town are beginning to get some mighty queer ideas about old Simpson. You just stay away from him!"



But it seemed to Bruce thereafter that wherever he went, the constable was there too, studying him, staring at him.

It happened while Bruce was in the park, watching some mill kids playing ball and wishing that he could dare over-ride his father's veto and join them. As he walked sadly away, Mr. Simpson stepped out from behind a tree.

"I want to talk to you," he hissed, and grasped Bruce's arm roughly, hauling him into the brush.



Bruce twisted and squirmed, fighting free just as Mr. Cooper, the grocer, came up the path.

The grocer was not a particularly brave man, but to him the scene spoke for itself. He saw the tearful boy struggling with the grim-faced snarling old man, and he came at a run, shouting: "Let him go! So it *was* you! Let him go! MURDERER!"



In moments, there were others, all converging on the startled old man. Mr. Simpson hesitated . . . and then he ran. As the others came, they snatched up pieces of wood, stones. They fanned out, howling. And they hunted him.

But the constable managed to elude them. The men took Bruce home.

"I knew it," said John Emery. "My boy gave him away . . . so he wanted to kill him! Like he killed the others! Well, we know who we're after, now!"



Bruce's father was good at organizing, and the townsmen were sheep to be led. Angry sheep, afraid for their young. Mr. Simpson was doomed at that moment. Emery got his gun and the crowd went baying down Main Street toward the old constable's house.

He wasn't there, of course. So the men ransacked the house. In a drawer, carefully wrapped in a stained napkin, they found the head of the Hayes boy, the one whose body had been left by the creek.



John Emery stared at the ghastly trophy for a long time, silently, while the others fidgeted and turned away.

"He doesn't deserve to live," he whispered, finally. Then he swung around. "I'm appointing you all deputies!" he shouted. "I don't know whether I have the right or not, but I'm taking it! We're going to find Simpson, and when we do, he won't do any more murdering!" He looked around belligerently. "Anyone got any other ideas?"

There was no answer. No one would go against John Emery. "All right," he snarled. "Let's go!"



Outside, Bruce was waiting. He still felt sorry for old Mr. Simpson, but this was too good to miss. The excitement of it.

"Go home," his father told him. "Now! Get into the house and stay there! And don't stop on the way!"



Bruce started, but he went only as far as the corner. Other kids were following the men! Why shouldn't he? They made room for him in their ranks when he caught up, but no one spoke to him. He was John Emery's son. Their parents had told them often to keep away from Bruce. Mr. Emery didn't like having Bruce mingle with them, and *their* fathers weren't anxious to lose their jobs in Emery's mill.

So, among many, Bruce saw it all. The men stopped at the edge of town only long enough to split into small groups. These spaced themselves out, each several hundred yards separated from the next, and began to move slowly forward. There was open ground here, thick with tall summer grass. A man could hide in it, but not from a line of angry men beating every square inch as they advanced.

A mile from town, Simpson stood up from his hiding place. He stood in plain sight, his face streaked with perspiration, and shouted at them. But his words were jumbled at that distance. The line of men, drawn by John Emery, came on. It was Emery himself who picked up the jagged stone and threw it.

"Murderer!" he screamed. "We don't want to hear your mealy-mouthed pleas for mercy!"

Simpson turned, his face white with terror, and fled. A hail of stones rained down upon him as he scampered wildly through the tall grass. When Emery remembered his gun, it was too late. Simpson was a bad target. The shot missed.



Only the others hadn't expected gunfire! It sobered them. One by one, they came to a halt. This wasn't a job for honest citizens. Left to themselves, they'd have turned back. Let the State Police find Simpson.

"Cowards!" John Emery stood before them, raging. "You're afraid of him, aren't you? No wonder you're all nobodies! He kills your children! But that isn't enough! He mutilates them! And you hang back! He's an animal, and you hesitate! He doesn't belong in the same world with decent men, and you'd let him go free! You'd eliminate a mad dog, but you'd let a killer like Simpson escape to kill again!"

"C'mon. What are we waiting for?"

"Yeah. Let's go!"

Here and there, a voice took up the chorus. Some, because the fire of Emery's rhetoric had taken hold of them; some, because John Emery was a powerful man, not to be defied. The men moved together, coalesced into a unit. As a unit, they were powerful, without fear.

The mob was a single beast with many bodies and only one brain, then. John Emery's brain. It was he who led them across the fields. It was he who, when they approached the deserted barn standing desolate among the weeds, reasoned that that was where Simpson would hide. It was he who cupped his hand to his mouth after the men had surrounded the barn and shouted into the wind:

"Come out, Simpson. We know you're in there! The barn is surrounded! You can't get away! Come out and take your medicine, you dirty murdering—!"



"No!" The voice from the barn was a strangled sob. "You're all insane! You can't do this! Any man deserves a trial..."

"You've had your trial, Simpson!" Emery's voice was the trumpet of doom. He stood rampant, big and powerful, aware of his authority, aware of his position as the leader. Savoring it. Enjoying it.

"Come out, Simpson! This is your last chance!"

"No!"



Bruce could see his father from the distance where he had come to a halt with the other kids. He could see his father go into a hurried consultation with the others and then see the men walk to the tinder-dry walls of the old barn.



The first puff of orange flame told Bruce what was happening. It was like the Fourth of July at the Fair Grounds. First, a single bit of brightness. Then others, spreading, mingling, until the barn was a giant torch, with the men dancing around it like Indians, drunk with what they had done.



Bruce felt sick. Mr. Simpson had been inside the barn. Only there was no barn now. There was just a pile of charred, smoking, black ruins, and the men were walking away from it, one by one. The reaction had already set in and the horror of their act was beginning to take its creeping course through each individual conscience. The town would never be the same after today.



But Bruce did not know that. He felt sick, and then normalcy began to assert itself. His father would be furious if he were not home when he got there. In the world of a nine year old, the immediate is far more important than the past. And Mr. Simpson was already in the past.

Bruce turned and scampered for home.



John Emery was the last to leave. The rest of the mob had slunk away, but he was made of sterner stuff. He was smiling as he crossed the fields, although he was not aware of his smile. He felt satisfied in a way that he did not attempt to classify. Power was a wonderful thing, he might have thought . . . if he'd bothered to think about his emotion at all.



Susan Emery was seated in silence in the living room when he entered. Word of what had taken place had already spread. But she did not condemn nor condone. Fifteen years of John Emery's overbearance had long since turned her into a pale shadow in the light of his arrogance.

"Well, say it!" He stood before her, waiting.

"Say, what, John?" She did not look up.

"What you're thinking! That we should have let the law take its course! That we had no right to take the law into our own hands!"

"Well, *did* you have the right, John?" She studied him.



Emery purpled.

"Yes! We did! The man was a monster! I suppose you'd have felt sorry for him!" His voice boomed through the house. "Suppose it was *your* boy that he murdered! Would you have felt sorry for him *then*? It had to be done!"

The words were not a defense. They were an explanation.

"Bah! Women!" He turned away. "What's the use of trying to make them understand?"



From above, a thin stream of dust sifted down. Emery looked up at the attic fan.

"Bruce! Are you up in that filthy attic again?"

"Yes, father!" Through the louvers, Bruce could see his father's angry face.



"Get down here! I've told you a hundred times that I don't want you playing up there!"

"Yes, father!"

Carefully, Bruce began to place his treasures back into their hiding place under the loose board.



Poor Mr. Simpson. Father had bullied him, too. Like he bullied everyone. Father had driven everyone away, and had made Mr. Simpson lonely, too.

That was why Bruce had slipped into Mr. Simpson's house that morning and left a treasure for him, carefully wrapped in a napkin.

So that Mr. Simpson would not be lonely anymore.

Bruce was still holding the last of his treasures when his father came into the attic and stopped to stare with the blood draining from his face.

There were four of them in the cavity beneath the loose board. And one in Bruce's hands. Five dead, perpetually smiling heads. Bruce's friends. His real, honest to truly friends who would never leave him, no matter how much his father insisted that they weren't good enough to play with him.



THE END

Reflection of DEATH



Ahead of you, the endless white line that divides the highway stretches off into the blackness beyond the probing yellow fingers of your speeding car's headlight beams. Beside you, Carl sits in silence, puffing on a cigarette, its glowing orange tip reflecting in the windshield. You grip the wheel a little tighter and shiver, as a chill runs up your spine. You wonder idly if it's the cold, or this sudden feeling that has come over you. This sudden premonition of impending doom.

"Getting pretty cold, isn't it, Carl?" you say finally, your voice invading your fearful thoughts and driving them back into the dark.

"Yeah," Carl mutters. "Lucky thing we wore warm clothes with the heater on the fritz . . ."

You and Carl have been riding since daybreak. In another hour, you'll be home. You're tired now. The strain of driving throughout the long day and into the night is beginning to have its effect. Your eyelids are heavy. They keep closing. You shiver again and take your foot off the accelerator.

"You'd better take over for this last stretch, Carl," you say, applying the brakes. "I'd hate to fall asleep at the wheel."

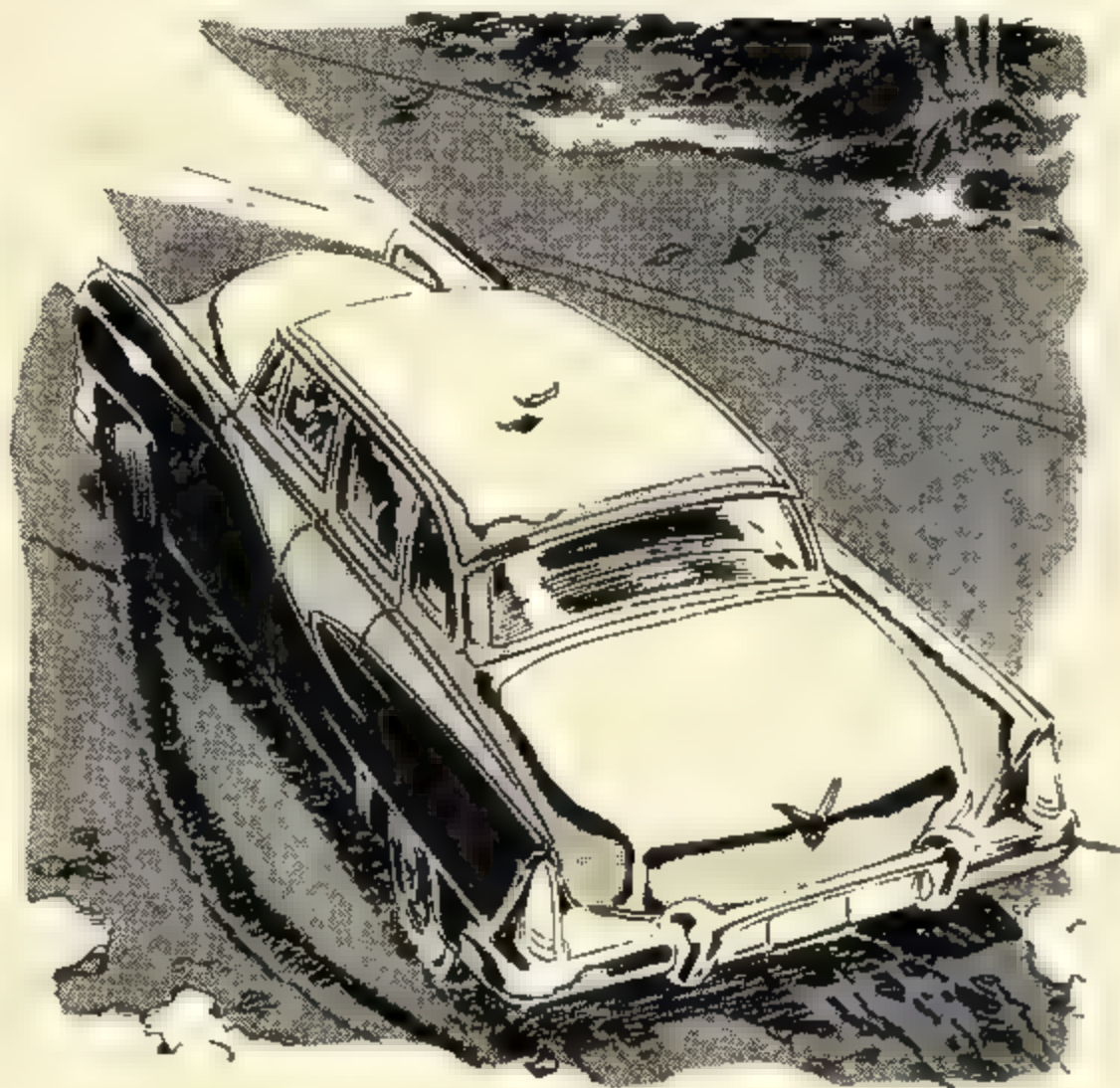
"Sure, Mel," Carl smiles.



You pull off the road, and stop the car. Carl gets out, and an icy blast lashes at your face. You slide across the seat as Carl moves around the car and slips in behind the wheel.

"Why don't you take a little snooze, Mel?" Carl says as he guides the car back out onto the highway. "I'll wake you up when we get to town."

"Maybe I will, Carl," you answer. "I'll see . . ."



You draw your overcoat up around your neck, pull your hat down, reach into your pocket for your gloves, and slip them on. The feeling is back again now, gnawing at you, chilling you in spite of your protective clothing.

You stare out through the windshield. The road comes out of the darkness ahead of you and slides beneath the car . . . faster and faster . . . unending. Carl begins to whistle an off-key tune. The motor purrs. The tires hum. The road comes on. On . . . and on . . . and on . . .



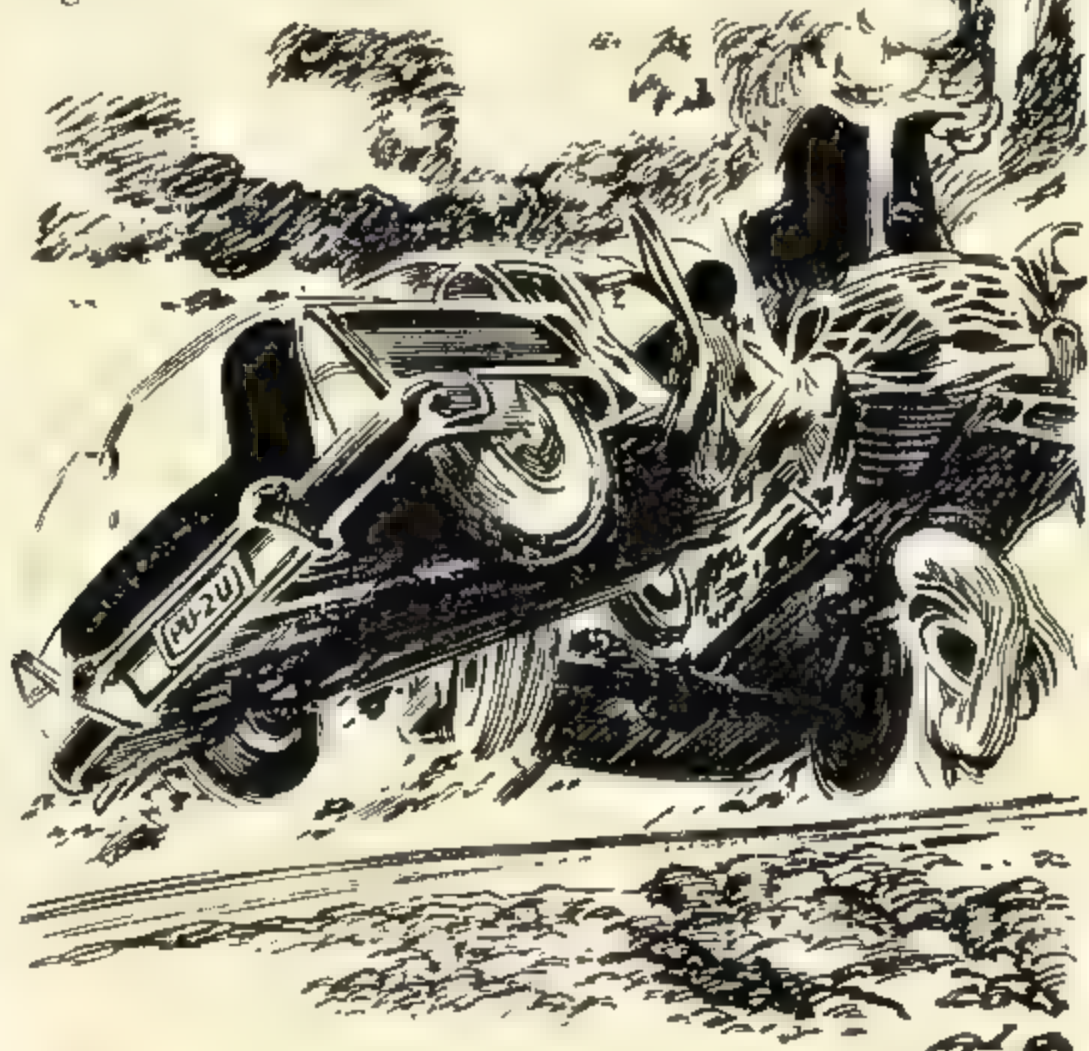
Your head begins to nod. Carl's whistling continues. Flat. Unmelodic. Suddenly he gasps. You look up.

A pair of headlights . . . bright . . . blinding . . . hurtles at you from out of the blackness. You try to scream, but it chokes in your throat, a rattling cough.

"Look out, Mel," Carl shouts. "We're going to hit . . ."



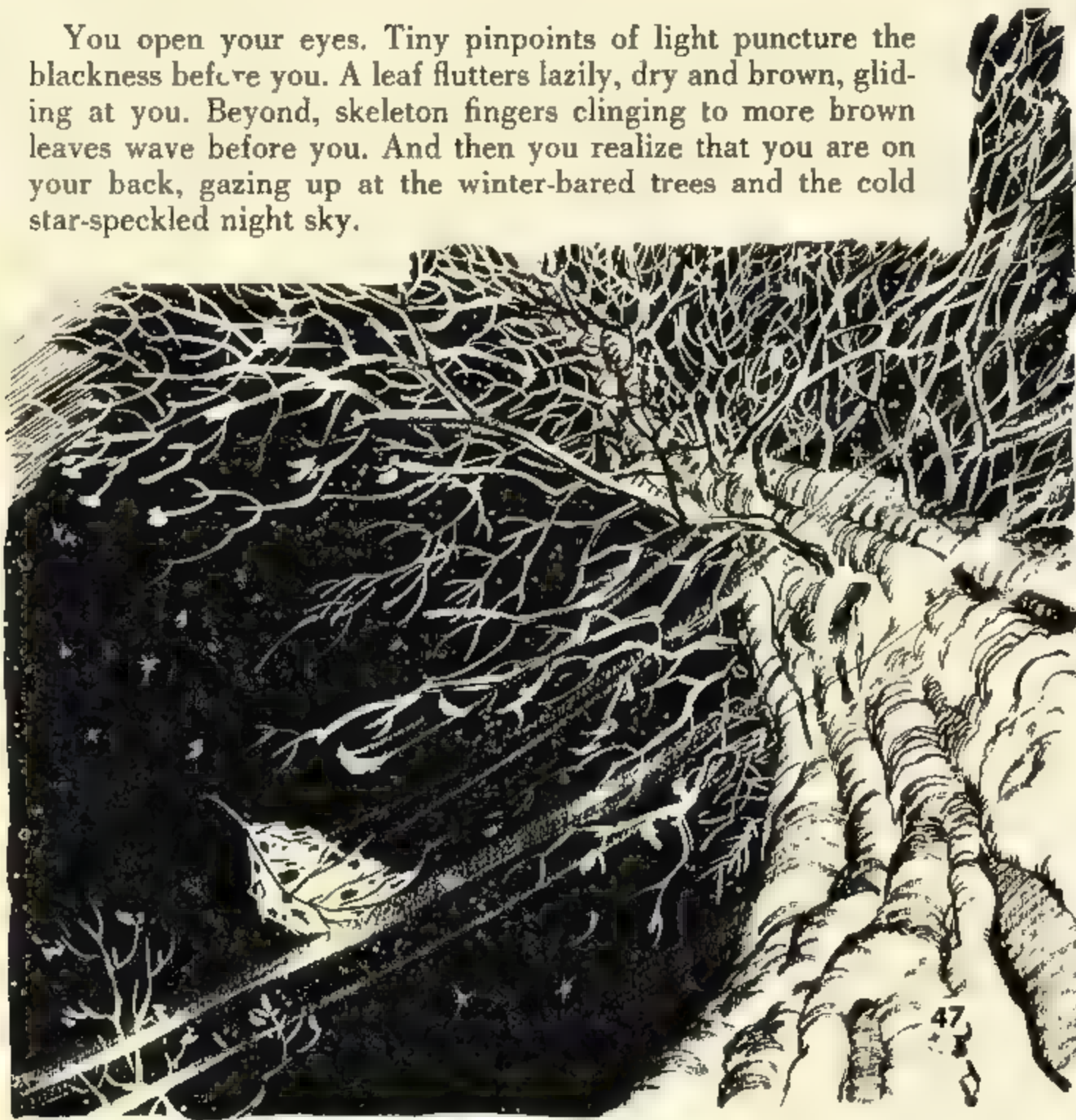
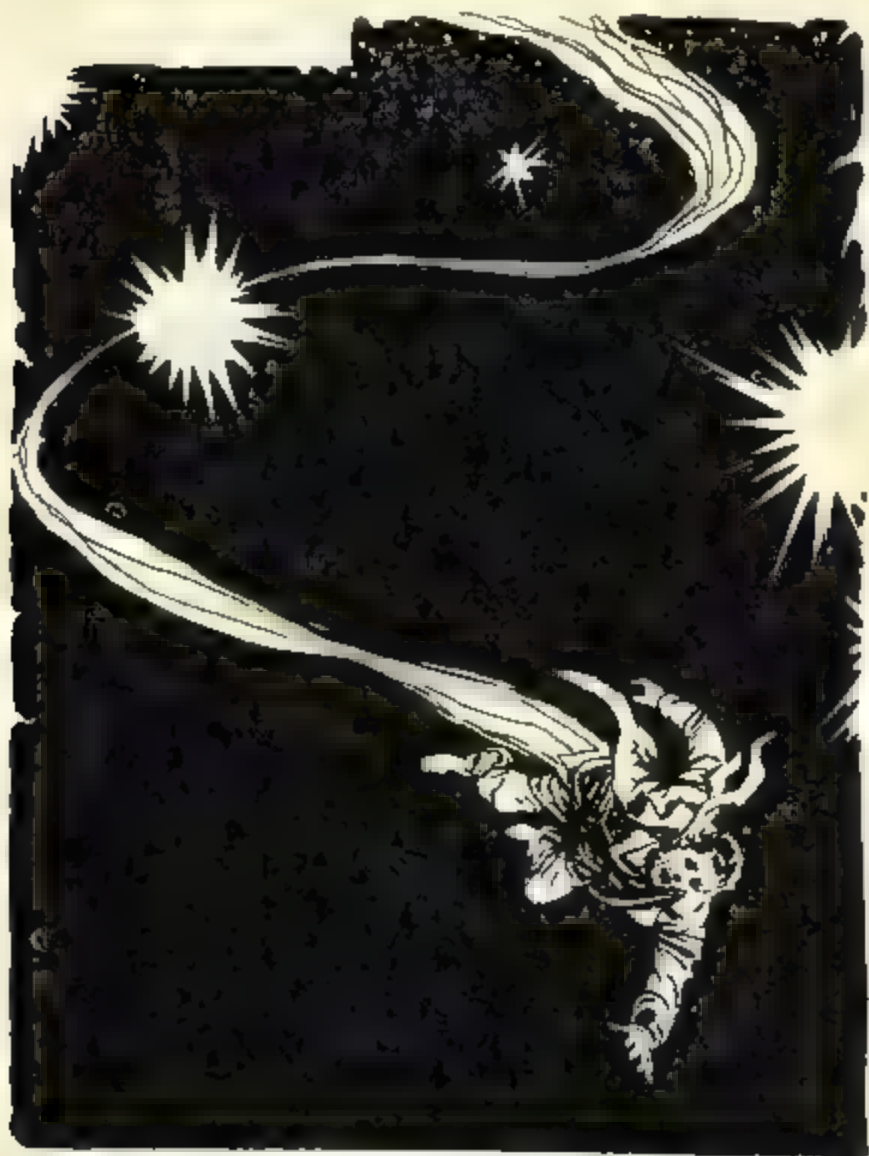
You shut your eyes and hear the shrieking of brakes . . . the sudden thundering splintering crash of tons of metal and glass.



You feel yourself fly forward. There is a blasting light . . . a sudden shooting pain . . . a rush of cold air . . . and then the velvet-black night closes in. All is silent, save for a distant, far-away whimpering.

The blackness is empty . . . bottomless . . . eternal. You float in it . . . twisting . . . falling . . . then rising again. The pain is gone. The cold is gone. Everything is gone. Only the darkness remains. The infinite velvet blackness. Empty. Bottomless. Eternal.

You open your eyes. Tiny pinpoints of light puncture the blackness before you. A leaf flutters lazily, dry and brown, gliding at you. Beyond, skeleton fingers clinging to more brown leaves wave before you. And then you realize that you are on your back, gazing up at the winter-bared trees and the cold star-speckled night sky.

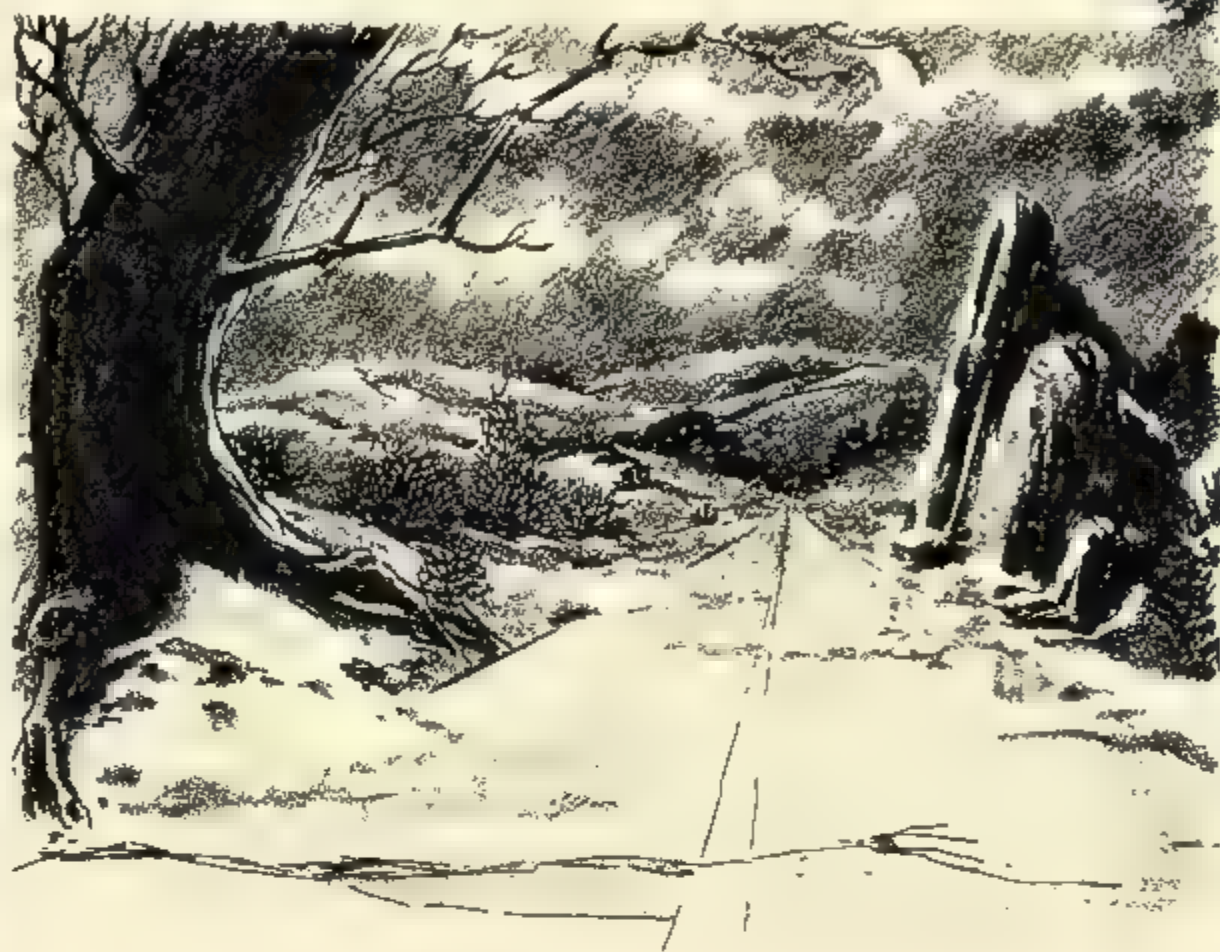


You raise your head slowly and look about. You are lying at the edge of a road. You try to remember. And then it comes back to you. The memory of those blinding headlights. The screaming shattering crash. A collision. You've been in an awful collision and you've been thrown clear. But the wreck! The aftermath! The mass of twisted steel and splintered glass! Where is it?



You struggle to your feet. Your clothes are torn and dirty. And there's an odor . . . a sickening smell that you can't place. You stumble out to the road . . . look up and down. You look for the wreck.

But there's no sign of it. No smashed glass. No impact-distorted metal. Nothing! Just the road. The clean, white concrete road, reaching into the moonlit night.



You turn as a distant hum grows louder. A car is coming. You can see the headlights, like far-away cat's eyes in the night, growing larger. You stand there, in the center of the highway lane, as the car bears down upon you. You raise your gloved hand. Its wailing brakes bring the car to a screeching stop. You can hear the driver's angry shout:

"Crazy damn fool! Do you want to get yourself killed?"



You step to the window, close to him. You start to ask him if he'll be good enough to drive you to town . . . that there has been a wreck and . . .

But then you see the sudden wild look in his eyes. A look of stark terror. You back off a little, confused, as he stares at you and shrieks . . . and shrieks . . .



You watch as the car meshes gears and careens away. You listen as his screaming fades into the night. You do not understand. Then you laugh to yourself. Of course! You must have been *cut* in the accident! Perhaps the sight of blood startled him. You shrug and start down the road. Toward town. Toward home.



And then you see the fire. There's someone under the conduit bridge, cooking. You can smell the savory odor over the sickening stench that seems to surround you. You move toward him. Down the road embankment. Perhaps he heard the crash. Perhaps he saw the accident. As you approach, you see that it is a hobo . . . a tramp huddled by the fire. He stirs something in a can hung over the flames. He looks up as you approach.

"Welcome, stranger," he smiles. "If you're hungry, set yourself down. The stew's just about done . . ."



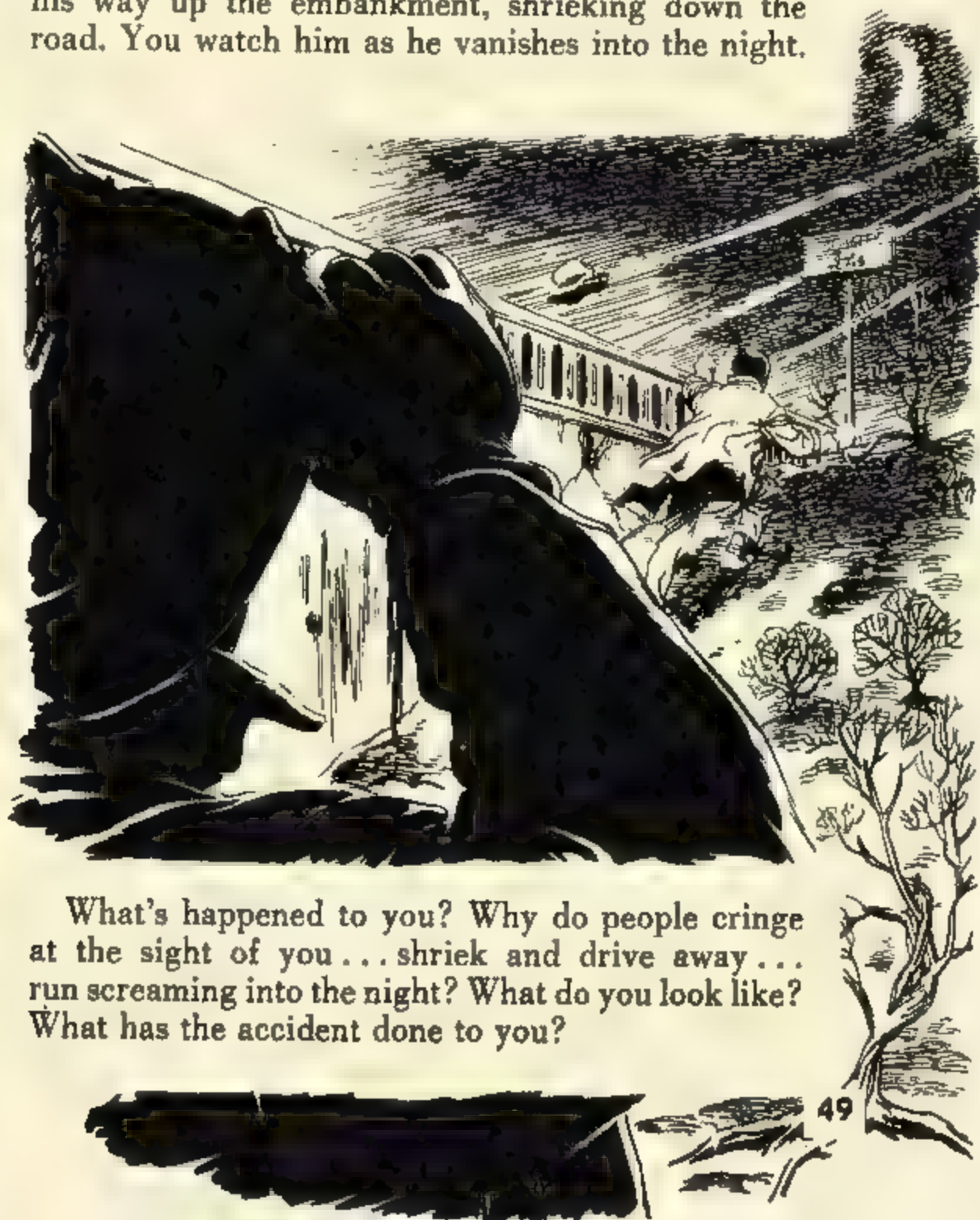
You move into the firelight. The tramp looks into the can and sniffs, stirring its contents.

"There's nothing like a hot can of stew on a cold night like . . ." He turns toward you, and suddenly the blood drains from his unshaven face. He cringes back against the stone wall.

"Oh, Lord," he gasps. "No. No! Keep away . . ."



He stumbles to his feet and begins to run, clawing his way up the embankment, shrieking down the road. You watch him as he vanishes into the night.



What's happened to you? Why do people cringe at the sight of you . . . shriek and drive away . . . run screaming into the night? What do you look like? What has the accident done to you?

You look down . . . at the crumpled sheets of newspaper the tramp had been sitting on. You read the date, and you do not understand. "*February 26, 1956!*" Impossible! It cannot be! That's almost two months from now! Today . . . today is January 1st! The morning of the 2nd, at the most!



You and Carl had been returning from Chicago . . . from a New Year's party. A wild New Year's party. You'd been driving all day. New Year's day. Now, it is New Year's night. Or the next morning. No more. It has to be! How long could you have been unconscious? Almost two months? That's impossible! Or is it?

You climb the embankment and continue on toward town. And then you see another car coming. And this time, as you step into its headlight glare and signal for it to stop, you're determined. You must get help. You must!



The car whines to a stop. There's a woman at the wheel. She's frightened. Well, what woman wouldn't be? A lonely highway, late at night. A strange man . . . stepping out in front of her car . . . forcing her to stop or hit him. Of course she's frightened. She stares wide-eyed into the darkness, trying to see you.

"W-what is it?" she stammers. "W-what do you want?"



You step forward. You are about to tell her not to be afraid . . . that there's been an accident . . . that you mean no harm. But there isn't the time. She takes one look at you . . . her eyes roll . . . she utters a gurgling groan . . . and then she faints.

You open the car door . . .



You slide in beside her and drive the car to the outskirts of town. You leave it there, on a side-street, the woman unconscious on the front seat. Then, you make your way home.

When you reach your house, you stop, dumbfounded. The lawn is litter-strewn and overgrown. Old newspapers whisper across the walk. The doors and windows are boarded up. The house stands silent and empty and deserted, like a tomb.



There is a sign tacked to the boarded-up door. You move closer . . . read it: *"No Trespassing,"* the bold black letters scream at you, *"by order of the sheriff. This property has been foreclosed by the People's Bank and Trust Co., January 15, 1956, to be sold at auction on . . ."*

You turn away as distant footsteps echo up the deserted street. Someone is coming.



A lone figure approaches. You run to him. Is it possible? Have you really been unconscious for nearly two months?

"What day is this?" you cry as you near him. "What's today's date? I must know . . ."

And then you see his face . . .



He runs from you, wildly, shouting for help, stumbling, falling, getting up, running again. And you run after him. You only want to ask him a question. Why does he run? Why does everybody run from you? What is there about you that makes people scream and faint at the sight of you?



Carl's house! You're standing in front of Carl's house, and the screaming stranger is gone!

Carl will help you! Carl, who was with you when the accident occurred! He'll know! He'll be able to tell you what happened!

You climb the steps and ring the doorbell . . . again and again.



Heavy footsteps approach from within. The door opens. Carl stares out at you. You wait for him to scream . . . wait for that sudden look of horror . . . wait for him to run from you.

But nothing happens. He only stands there, staring at you. "Carl," you cry. "Let me come in. You've got to help me. I don't know what's happened to me. Please . . ."

"Who . . . who are you?" Carl demands.

"It's me, Carl," you say. "Mel! It's me . . ."

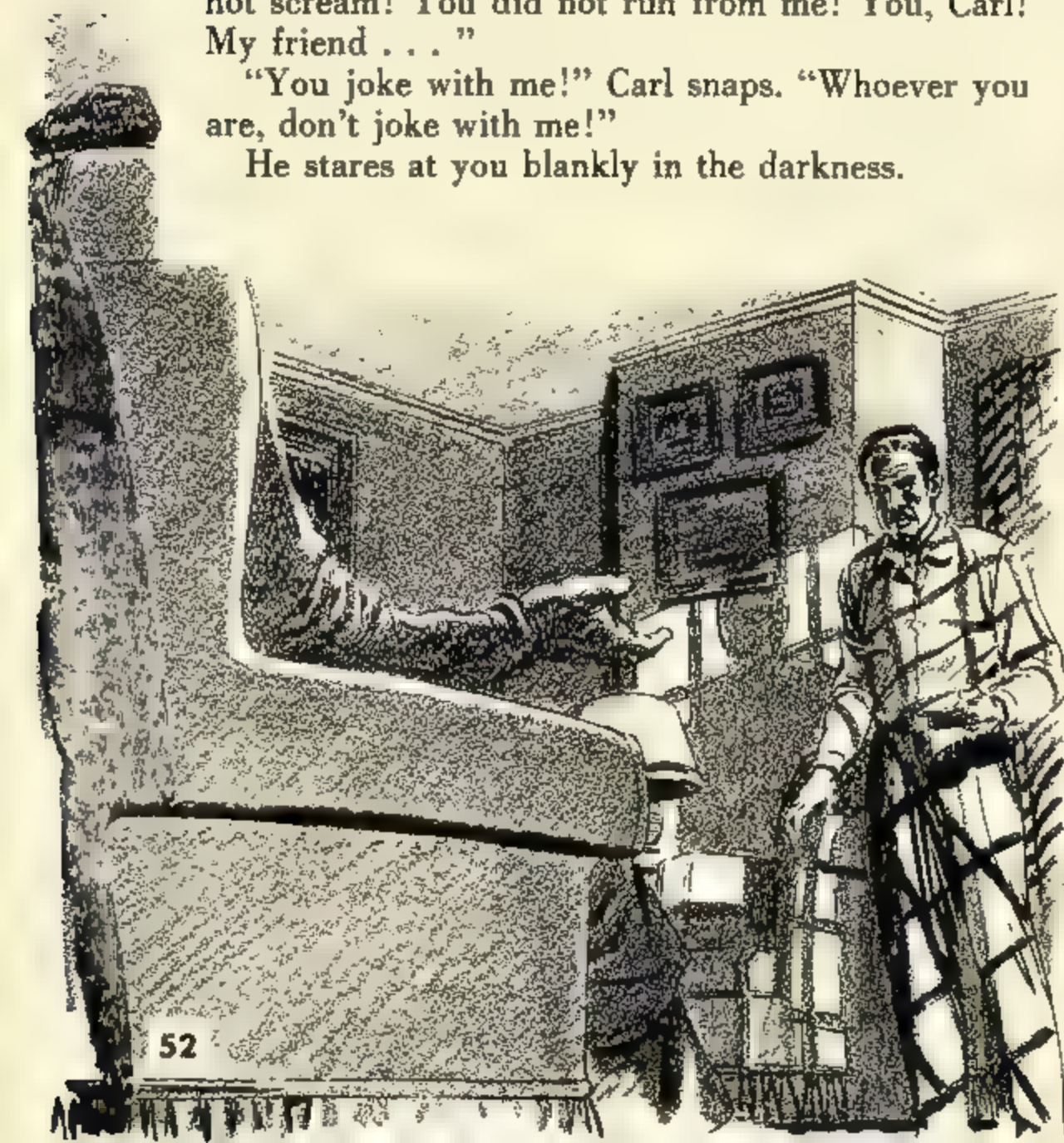


You push past him into the darkened house. You tell him the whole story. You blurt it out. Everything. The crash . . . how you came to . . . how people screamed and ran from you when they saw you.

"All except you, Carl," you whisper. "You did not scream! You did not run from me! You, Carl! My friend . . ."

"You joke with me!" Carl snaps. "Whoever you are, don't joke with me!"

He stares at you blankly in the darkness.



"Don't you know me, Carl?" you shout. "Don't you recognize your old friend Mel?"

Carl shakes his head and reaches for the light switch. "Don't you know that Mel and I were in an accident two months ago?" he hisses. "Don't you know that I couldn't recognize *anybody*?"

He snaps on the light and you see his face . . . his eyes!

"Don't you know that I lost my sight in that accident? That I'm totally blind?"



"And don't you know that Mel *died* in that accident?" Carl goes on. "That he was *horribly mangled*! So how can you be Mel, when *Mel's dead*? That's why I say, don't joke with me . . ."



You reel in disbelief at Carl's words. You shake your head and gasp.

"No, Carl! I *am* Mel! I am! I *can't* be dead! I . . . I . . ."

You look around you wildly. You see the mirror. You stagger towards it . . . and you look in.



And then you scream. You open your rotted, torn, decomposed mouth at the sight of your awful reflection in the mirror and you *scream* . . .



And suddenly, Carl is beside you . . . shaking you . . . shaking . . .

"Mel. Mel! *Mel* . . ."



Your scream of horror vanishes, the hum of a car engine comes up, and Carl's voice probes down into the darkness.

"Mel! Mel, wake up!" Carl is saying.

"Huh? Wha . . . ?" You open your eyes.

"You've been having a nightmare, Mel!"

You look around. You're in the car, and Carl is driving. You've been dreaming . . . dreaming the whole horrible experience!



"Thank God," you whisper. "Thank God!"

"For what, Mel?" Carl asks.

"Thank God it was only a nightmare, Carl!" You cover your eyes with your gloved hand. "It was awful. Awful! I dreamed I was dead! Everything . . . everything was so real! So real!"

"Oh. Yeah. Sure," Carl mutters. He begins to whistle an off-key tune.



You sit back and watch the road as it unfolds beyond the headlight glow and rushes toward you and under the car. You think about your nightmare, and you wonder whether you should tell Carl about what you dreamed.

"We'll be home soon, Mel," Carl says, and goes back to his flat, unmelodic whistling.



You stare out of the windshield. Far away, a pair of headlights knife through the darkness. They come down the white highway . . . bright . . . blinding . . . closer and closer.

And suddenly, icy fingers are gripping your hammering heart. Suddenly, stark terror claws at the back of your neck. Those headlights. Coming at you. Faster. Faster. Like . . .

Like in the dream!

"Carl," you whisper hoarsely. "We . . . we . . . That car!"



Your scream of warning chokes in your throat, a rattling cough.

"Look out, Mel," Carl shouts. "We're going to hit!"
The dream! So much like the dream!

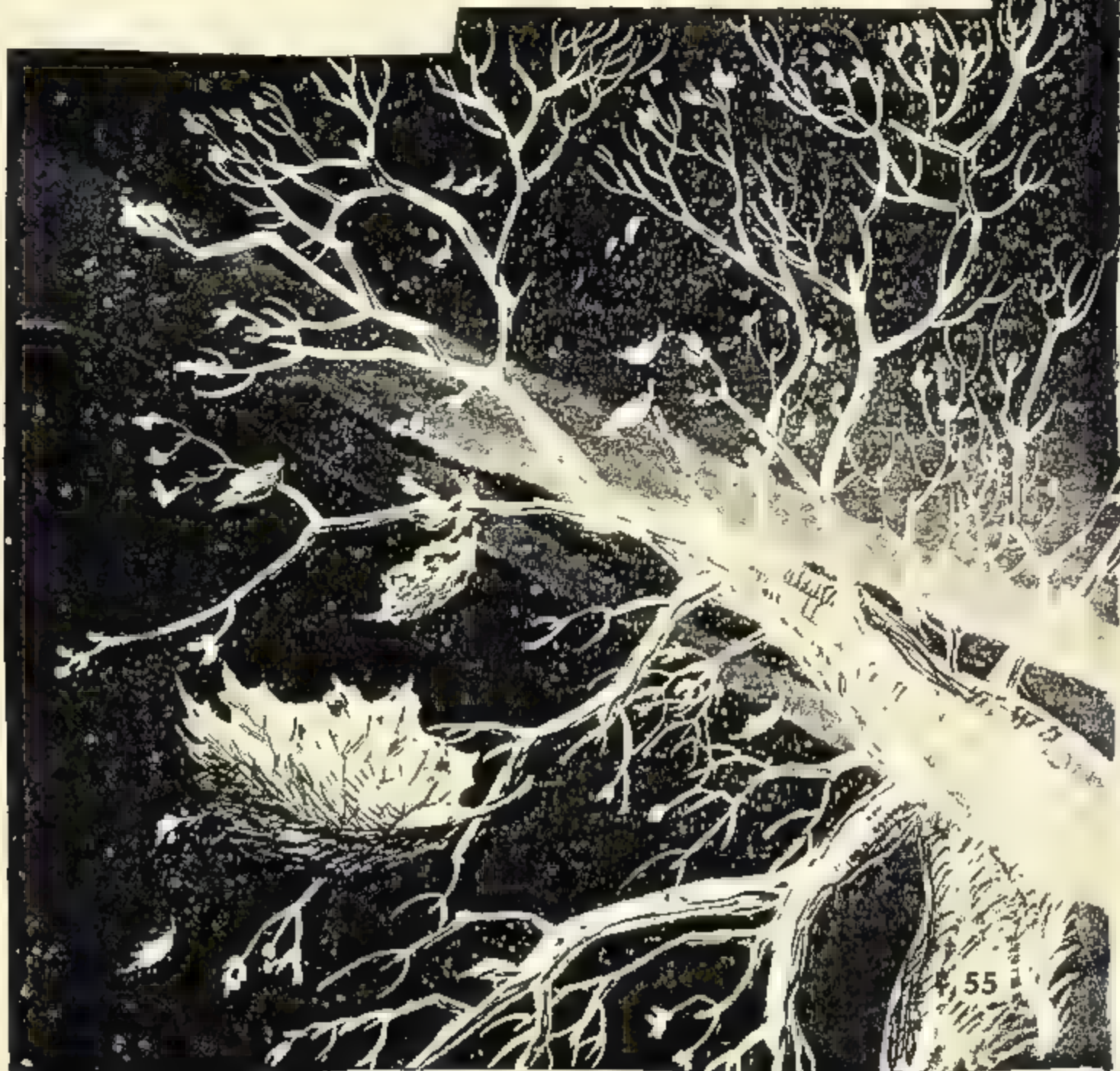


You shut your eyes and hear the shrieking of brakes . . . the sudden thundering splintering crash of tons of metal and glass.



You feel yourself fly forward. There is a blasting light . . . a sudden shooting pain . . . a rush of cold air . . . and then the velvet-black night closes in and you are floating in a sea of darkness . . . twisting . . . falling . . . then rising again . . .

You open your eyes. You can see the pin-point stars above you, twinkling. A leaf shudders, then tears itself away from the skeleton tree overhead and floats lazily down toward you. You know that you are on your back, lying at the side of the road. You know, because the scene is the same . . . the same as in your awful awful dream.



You raise your head and look down at your feet, at the road. And you know that you will see no smashed glass, no twisted metal. Because this is the dream! The dream come to reality!



You struggle to your feet. Your clothes are torn and dirty, and there is a sickening odor. You know what that odor is. You *know*, now! The sound of an engine tells you of the approach of a car. You step out onto the highway . . .



The car screeches to a stop, its tires tracing black lines on the white moon-lit concrete. You wait for the driver's angry shout, just as you dreamed it. And, just as in your dream, it comes:

"Crazy damn fool! Do you want to get yourself killed?"

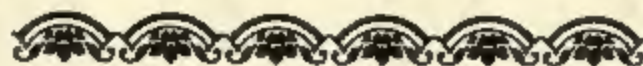
The dream is *real*! You know what's about to happen! You step to the window, close to him, and you steel yourself for his reaction.

And it comes. A haunting, terrified scream.



And you know, now, that *you are dead*, and that this time, there will be *no awakening*! That this time, it is *no dream*!

THE END



Now! Turn Your Waste Gas Into SUPER POWER!

IT'S TRUE! Now you can get the breath-taking acceleration... jack-rabbit starts... blazing new power that you've dreamed about for years—simply by harnessing the raw, unburnt gasoline that your engine is wasting today!

You can get performance from your present car that will make your friends gasp with astonishment—and you can save \$25, \$50, even \$75 a year on gas bills alone doing it!

Yes! You, yourself can fit this amazing GASOLINE ATOMIZER on to your car in as little as 20 easy minutes! And it is guaranteed to pay you back your full purchase price, in gas savings alone, in the first 3 to 4 short months that you use it. Here's why!

By RICHARD JOHNS

Mr. Car Owner! How would you like to have the driving thrill of your life next weekend?

Picture this yourself! Next weekend you go down to your car—the same tired car that you've been driving for years. You've made only one simple change to that car, so easy that your 16-year-old son could do it! But now, when you turn on the ignition, a modern miracle of engineering science comes to life under your hood!

From the very first moment, you'll see and feel the difference in that engine. That engine will hum with new, throbbing power. When you release the emergency brake, your car will glide out of its parking space... roll down the street with your foot hardly touching the pedal. Every 30 or 40 seconds, you'll give that car an extra shot of gas... feeling it spurt ahead... testing the new power that's singing underneath your foot!

We ask you to pull up to another car at the stop light, of approximately the same year and make as your own! Wait until the light changes from red to green. Let the other car start first. Wait till the other car gets half way across the street. And then slam your foot down on the gas pedal!

Before that other car has even crossed the street, you will have caught up with him. For one brief second, you and that other car will race fender to fender. And then you will flash away from him... you will leave him a full block behind... you will look in your rear view mirror and see the startled look of amazement in the other driver's eyes!

TEST THIS NEW POWER A HUNDRED DIFFERENT WAYS!

But this is just the beginning! Test this equipment for one full

FREE!

UP TO \$3 RETAIL VALUE! UP TO 2 TO 4 MILES MORE PER GALLON INSTANTLY, SAY THOUSANDS OF USERS.

THIS is probably the most widely sold piece of automotive equipment in the world! OVER HALF A MILLION DRIVERS have paid up to \$3 a set to put these amazing Air Bleed Needles on their cars! But we bought out an entire factory at a sacrifice price! For this one advertisement only, we can offer you these exact same needles as a FREE gift, even if you return the MINI-SUPERCHARGER!



1. They fit onto the carburetor of your car, where they replace the standard Idling Adjustment Screw. If you have a six-cylinder car, then you will need only one of the Air Bleed Needles (regular retail price, \$1.50). If you have an eight-cylinder car, then you will need two needles (regular retail price — \$3.00). In either case, you simply unscrew the old needle and put in the new. THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT! Even if you never looked under your hood before, you can do it in 60 seconds... without touching a tool, without even getting your hands dirty!

2. The purpose of these Air Bleed Needles is to STOP YOUR CAR FROM WASTING GAS IN STOP-AND-GO DRIVING... and to save you up to 2 to 4 miles a gallon. If you use your car to go shopping... if you have to fight traffic as much as once a week, then we believe you'll bless the day you first put this equipment in your car! And of course, at the same time it can give you easier, quieter performance and pick-up, and smoother, more economical idling!

REMEMBER, THIS IS PROBABLY YOUR ONLY CHANCE TO GET THESE AMAZING AIR BLEED NEEDLES AS A FREE GIFT—a gift that is worth as much as \$3 to you—and a gift that is yours to keep even if you return the MINI-SUPERCHARGER!

But you must act today! Our supply is limited. We can make this offer only this one time in this magazine! Simply send us the make and year of your car, and this gift is yours! BUT ACT TODAY!

WE GUARANTEE YOUR GAS SAVINGS!

Clip this guarantee section out of this page. It authorizes you to try this amazing new MINI-SUPERCHARGER for a full four months ENTIRELY AT OUR RISK! At the end of that time, this device must save you—on gas alone—EVERY SINGLE CENT OF THE MONEY THAT YOU PAID FOR IT—OR YOUR FULL MONEY WILL BE REFUNDED! This offer is good for a full four months! It is probably the most amazing offer in car history! You have nothing to lose! ACT TODAY!

Eugene Stevens, Inc.
Eugene Stevens, Pres.

month—entirely at our risk! Test it on the highway! Use it to flash away from other cars... spurt up the steepest hills... actually pass other cars in 2, 4, 6 and even 8 seconds LESS than you could have done formerly!

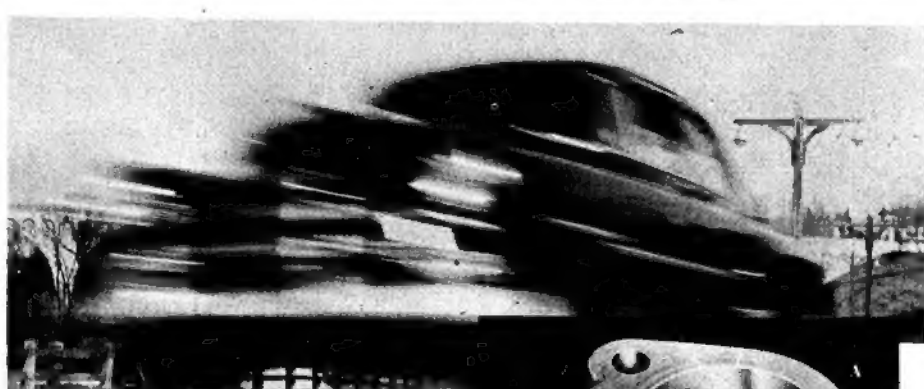
Test this equipment in long-range driving! See the enormous gas savings it gives you at high speeds! Prove to yourself that at 50... 60... even 70 miles an hour, your foot is still half-way up on the pedal—you still have all the reserve power you need to get out of any emergency on the highway!

Yes, and test this equipment in stop-and-go city driving! Prove to yourself that it gives you the instant acceleration you need to get out in front of the crowd... with far less gas than you're using today! Prove to yourself that it can actually save you \$25 to \$50 to \$75 on your gas bills every single year... that it actually pays back its full cost, in gas savings alone, during the first three or four months—or your full money back!

HOW DOES THIS PRODUCT GIVE YOU SUCH TREMENDOUS NEW POWER?

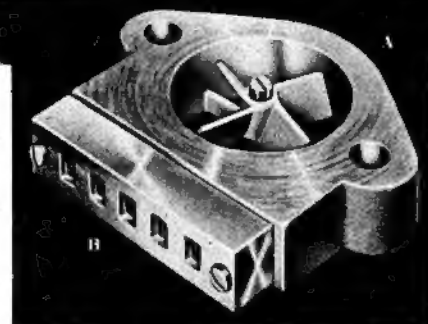
And you get all this performance—and more—from a small, polished machine of bronze and aluminum that you can hold in your hand! Here's why:

Gasoline in its liquid form is



YES! THIS AMAZING "MINI-SUPERCHARGER" BOOSTS THE POWER OF YOUR ENGINE AS MUCH AS 25%! Gives you the gas economy you've dreamed about for years! Here's why:

This Power Booster works on exactly the same principle as superchargers selling for as high as \$600. Its whirlwind propeller (A) breaks up the raw, unburnt gas that your engine is wasting today... gives you up to 25% more engine-driving power from every drop! Its emergency breather valve (B) forces huge quantities of fresh air into your engine... forces that engine to breathe deeper... push harder... pile up more mileage from every gallon you buy! It gives you A TREMENDOUS NEW BURST OF MONEY-SAVING POWER, just when you need it most—when you flash away from traffic... shoot up steep hills... pick up speed on the open highway!



No wonder dozens of leading car magazines call this the "money-saving discovery of the year." Test this amazing gas-saver yourself—without risking a penny! THE THRILLING FACTS ARE ON THIS PAGE!

not explosive. If you accidentally drop a lighted match into a bucket full of gasoline, the chances are 10 to 1 that that gasoline will actually put out that match. But simply mix that same bucket full of gas with the proper amount of air, and you will have enough explosive power to drive a ten ton truck!

The main purpose of this machine is to SUPER-MIX SUPER-VAPORIZE... SUPER-ATOMIZE your gas in exactly that way! To squeeze the hidden power out of that gas! To mix that gas with much greater volumes of air! To make that gas more explosive in the engine of your car!

No wonder men have paid up to \$600 for Superchargers! What we are offering you on this page is a MINI-SUPERCHARGER—easier to install—less expensive! But still the only power product you can buy with all these tremendous advantages:

1. You can install it yourself, in just 30 minutes, even if you never picked up a tool before

in your life! No \$10, \$15 or \$20 mechanic's bills! No drilling, or grinding of any kind! You never even touch the inside of your engine!

2. It never needs further adjustments, for the full lifetime of your car! Nothing to go out of order or break down on the highway. Completely guaranteed for 20 years.

3. It takes up no room in your car... makes no "soured-up" noise! No shifting around of engine parts. No "hot rod" noises to cause embarrassment!

SO EASY TO INSTALL THAT EVEN YOUR 16-YEAR-OLD SON CAN DO IT!



HERE'S ALL YOU DO!

Step 1. Open your hood. Locate Air Cleaner and Carburetor Unit that sits smack on top of your engine. Simply take an ordinary wrench and loosen the

two or three bolts that hold carburetor to the engine!

Step 2. Lift up the carburetor. Put MINI-SUPERCHARGER unit in place. What could be easier!

Step 3. Replace carburetor. Now turn on your engine! And then get in and take the most thrilling drive of your life!

TRY IT ENTIRELY AT OUR RISK

This MINI-SUPERCHARGER (U.S. Patent No. 2,409,937) sells for only \$9.95 for most six-cylinder cars and only \$11.95 for most eight-cylinder cars. This is your total cost—there is no installation fee! And, most important of all, we guarantee that you will save this full purchase in gas bills alone—in the first 3 to 4 months that you own this device.

You have nothing to lose! Try this equipment entirely at our risk. It must give you a whole new world of driving pleasure and economy or your full money back! Act today!

EUGENE STEVENS, INC.
400 MADISON AVE.,
N.Y.C., 17, N.Y.

---MAIL NO-RISK COUPON TODAY!---

EUGENE STEVENS, INC. EC-1

400 MADISON AVE., N.Y.C., N.Y.

Yes, I want to try your amazing MINI-SUPERCHARGER entirely at my risk! Please send me the precision-made model that fits my car. I will pay postman only... (see price list for all models at left), plus low COD charges. I understand that this item is completely guaranteed. It must give me tremendous new pick-up, acceleration and power... It must save me enough money, in gas alone, to pay back every cent of its cost in the first 3 to 4 months that I own it—or my full money back!

Also send me as your Extra Gift Premium, the Free Air Bleed Needle Set, mine as a gift! If not completely satisfied, I will return the MINI-SUPERCHARGER, but keep the needles!

MAKE OF CAR _____ please print
YEAR _____ NUMBER OF CYLINDERS _____
NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ ZONE _____ STATE _____

☐ CHECK HERE TO SAVE MORE! Enclose cash, check or money order, and we pay all postage and handling charges! You save 67¢. Same money-back guarantee, of course!

©Copyright By Eugene Stevens, Inc. 1955

MINI-SUPERCHARGER PRICE LIST

Buick	All Models	\$11.95
Cadillac	All Models	11.95
Chevrolet	All Models	9.95
Chrysler	Six's and Eight's up to 1949	9.95
Chrysler	All Eight's after '49	11.95
DeSoto	All Six's	9.95
DeSoto	All Eight's	11.95
Dodge	All Six's to 1953	9.95
Dodge	All Six's after 1953 and all Eight's	11.95
Ford	All Six's to 1953	9.95
Ford	All Six's after 1953 and all Eight's	11.95
Hudson	Pontiac's '50-'51-'52	9.95
Hudson	Forrest '51-'52-'53	9.95
Hudson	All other Models	11.95
Kaiser & Frazer	All Models thru '48	9.95
Kaiser & Frazer	All other Models	11.95
Lincoln	All Models	11.95
Nash	Six's '39 thru '51	9.95
Nash	Six's after 1951 and all Eight's	11.95
Oldsmobile	Six's '39 thru '51	9.95
Oldsmobile	All Six's after 1951 and all Eight's	11.95
Mercury	All Models	11.95
Packard	All Models	11.95
Plymouth	All Models	9.95
Pontiac	Six's '39 thru '53	9.95
Pontiac	All Six's after 1953 and all Eight's	11.95
Studebaker	Eight's '51 thru '55	11.95
Studebaker	All Six's and all Eight's to 1951	9.95
Willis	All Models	9.95

Olympic

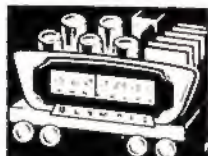
all 3 for the price of TV alone



TELEVISION



PHONOGRAPH



HI-FI RADIO

YES, A BONUS OF **3** FROM OLYMPIC TV

Look! Your choice of 17", 21" or 24" TV—
PLUS hi-fi radio — **PLUS** 3 speed automatic
 hi-fi phonograph ... all in one magnificent unit ...
 all for virtually the same money as ordinary TV
 sets alone! So why settle for only TV, when now you
 can own this beautiful 3-way combination at such
 a low price! See it at your dealer's today.



HI-FI
 AM/FM Radio-
 Phonograph

From
 149.95*

- 17"—21"—24" Models
- Single speaker or dual speaker **HI-FI** sound systems
- **DECORATOR STYLES** • modern • traditional • chinese
- **AM or AM/FM RADIO**

*Slightly higher in South and West

46 handsome combination models
 to fit every home interior!

OLYMPIC
 World's LEADER
 in COMBINATIONS

Send for free literature
Olympic
 RADIO AND TELEVISION INC.
 34-69 38th Avenue
 Long Island City 1, N. Y.

OLYMPIC RADIO & TELEVISION INC.
 34-69 38th Avenue, Long Island City 1, N. Y.

- ☐ Send me free literature on Olympic 3-Way combinations and hi-fi.
☐ Send me name of nearest Olympic dealer.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zone _____ State _____



Continuity Publishing

NEXT...

©1998 Neal Adams

CIMMERIAN32.SCANDED & EDITED